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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“I SHOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY DO THINK OF ME?” HE HAZARDS.]

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

—10.—

CHAPTER VI.

“Oh! you that have the charge of Love! keep him in rosy bondage bound.
Loose not a tie that round him clings; nor
ever let him use his wings
For even an hour, a minute’s flight!”

It was market-day at Quimpaire. This quaint old Breton town, nine miles from the little village of Pont l’Abbaye on the Odet, was one of the largest centres for marketing in the whole of that part of Brittany.

It boasted a curious old market-place, filled with little stalls of marketable produce on one day in each week, when the farmers’ wives from all the country round jogged into Quimpaire and exhibited their wares on the little stalls set up for the purpose, chattering one to the other, like a swarm of human magpies, as they undoubtedly were, waking up the slumbrous old town into something akin to liveliness.

Nannette Blaise, of the Pont l’Abbaye water-mill, had a tiny stall among the rest, where she sold butter, eggs, and fruit from the mill-garden, cultivated, watched and nurtured to perfection by André, who also fed the poultry, and latted them ready for the market.

The old woman always drove herself into Quimpaire every week in a little Breton cart of peculiar structure, but which ran along the hard, white, coiling, and often dusty road smoothly enough, despite its somewhat uncouth appearance, and was drawn by an aged mule, christened Bruno, presumably on account of his colour, which was certainly a brown, though of rather a dingy hue.

Bruno was old, no one really quite knew how old. He was a kind of Methuselah in Pont l’Abbaye, and respected accordingly.

Nannette was proud of him, as she sat behind him on market-days with her baskets of produce, while he ambled along most steadily and contentedly to his destination and back again the same day.

Sometimes Olive would go too. It was a small change in the dulness of her life at Pont l’Abbaye; and Miss Daunt, singularly

enough, never put her veto on the proceeding, which she might have done in this case without any great exercise of martinet authority.

But Miss Daunt knew Nannette was as steady as old Time, which may possibly have been the reason for this relaxing of her usual stiff rule and regulation.

Indeed, for the past year or more, the girl had been left a great deal to Nannette’s care and guidance.

Miss Daunt spent the most of her day at the convent with the nuns, who no doubt imagined they were going to reap a new convert in this visitor to their peaceful cloisters and simple existence.

Thus Olive had more liberty of thought and action than during all her previous life, and she had the greatest affection for Nannette, who, I am bound to say, humoured her in the smallest wish.

This August morning, quite early, long before the sun had made its beams too hot and irksome, and when the dew still lay in great diamond beads on every tree, flower, and pasture land, these two, the young girl and the old woman, had mounted the little oddly-



built Breton cart, and Bruno, in his rope harness, had carried them to Quimpaire, with all his usual steadiness of purpose, and also, it must be owned, of pace as well. Bruno could never be accused of fleetness by his worst enemy, which is saying a great deal for him.

Olive was not nearly so full of lively chatter on the road to market as was her general custom, for her thoughts ran so much upon that little white card with the graven name, "Alan Chichester" thereon, and also of the owner of that same card, which had been presented to her, as a voucher of respectability, only the previous evening, that she really forgot to talk.

"Alan Chichester!" she commanded, inwardly, as they passed fields and hedgerows, cottage and garden, on their way to Quimpaire. "Yes, it was a nice name for a man, and much more satisfactory to know, than to be obliged to think of him as A. C., or even as grey eyes."

So far, however, from being completely satisfied with her knowledge—and I think she ought to have been, only that the human mind is a most wayward, obstinate construction, and refuses to be guided in such things—it rather tended to heighten a desire to know more about him than his mere name. Where he lived, what he was, and who were his people, were obvious facts that now seemed to urge themselves upon her notice.

Perhaps time might answer these questions for her; she hoped time would be so kind as to do so. She was still thinking about him when they reached the Quimpaire market-place, where Bruno stopped without any checking on the part of Nannette, for he knew his way quite as well as she did herself, and the two got out, Olive first, as by right of youth.

Then Nannette arranged her fruit, flowers, eggs, and butter on the little stall with its striped awning overhead, and sat down on the rush-seat ready for the day's sale.

Olive as usual sauntered about through the market, chatting here and there to the different people she knew, and the farmers' wives all had a smile and nod for her. When she was tired of moving, she knew Nannette had another little rush-seat behind the stall where she could sit and rest as long as she chose, but for the present she preferred to wander about the different stalls, and see all that was to be seen in the market-place.

At last, just at the noonday, when the very busiest part of the market was over, she went and sat down under the awning, and Nannette placed a cup of milk before her, with a vine leaf of golden Reine Claude gages, and two superbly ripe, luscious peaches, which she soon set her pretty white teeth into with enjoyment.

As she commenced the second peach she suddenly heard a voice behind her say, quite quietly,

"A feast for the gods!"

She started, laid down the peach, and turned her head quickly in the direction of that quiet enunciation.

Then a tiny flush came into her face, and a smile to her lips, for there stood the owner of the card, about whom her thoughts had been straying.

He stepped round at once, and doffed his hat to her.

"Good Morrow!" he said again, putting out his hand with the obvious intention of a reciprocating motion on Olive's part.

She hesitated one second, glanced swiftly at Nannette calmly sitting on her rush-seat close by, knitting a very thick woollen stocking for Andre's winter wear, and then put forth her small soft hand to be shaken.

Whether Nannette took note of the operation could not be determined, for the old woman never lifted her eyes from her knitting, and seemed perfectly oblivious that any such small ceremony had been enacted between these two; she had never even looked in the newcomer's direction at all.

Olive had her suspicions, however, that Nannette saw very well what had taken place, despite her seeming blindness, and no doubt formed her own conclusions on the matter, for she knew the old dear could see through a brick wall as well, if not better, than most people; but she also knew that Nannette was her friend, not her enemy, and would never carry any tale-prattling to Miss Daunt, no matter how naughty she was. So Olive did not mind at all whether she had noted or not; and surely there was no harm in it, the girl argued, and, perhaps, quite justly too.

"Do you know I watched you eating that magnificent peach just now, and I candidly confess I was there and then seized with a horrible and overpowering envy?" he goes on comically, when the handshake had come to an end, and the greeting finished.

"Were you?" returns Olive, with a smile, looking up at him, standing there in the sunshine on the rough stones in the old market-place.

"Yes! I own it to my sorrow, for it was a very greedy envy, and nearly mastered me into coming forward before you had finished it, and asking you point-blank for a bite!"

"Why did you not? I am sure you would have been very welcome to one," she rejoins, laughing broadly till the dimples came.

"Should I? You are sure of that?" he questions, with some small energy.

"Of course; why should I not be?" he argues, with all simplicity. "Of course you would have had a bite directly—two, or even three bites if you wanted them."

"Are you always so ready to give when you are asked?" he says, rather pointedly, "or does it only extend to such material things as fruit; because one would like to know how much one might ask for without risking a terrible refusal, not that I think you would prove very hard-hearted in any case," he adds, looking down at the soft face.

"No," she answers, with a little shrug and laugh. "I am not hard-hearted, that I am certain of."

"So am I," he puts in, heartily. "Well, to prove you give me a bite of that peach you have in your hand. It looks a better one than the other. I long to taste it."

"I think it is sweeter than the other," she agrees, with the faintest of rosy reds coming into her cheeks at his request. But—but I have bitten into this peach. Won't you rather have these Reine Claude plums, they are just as good?" and she offers him the leaf of golden gages.

"No!" he says, decidedly, with a shake of the head, refusing the proffered dainties; "I have set my heart on tasting that peach. The Reine Claude plums may be very good; indeed, I do not doubt it, but that peach is better still. That peach or nothing!" he ends, airily.

"Very well," she returns, holding it out to him; "here it is. You shall have the peach, and I'll eat the poor, despised plums."

Without another single dehur he takes the extended fruit. There is only one small gap in its velvet side where Olive's little white teeth had set their mark in its luscious flesh, and finishes it straightway.

"Well," she says at length, watching the process interestingly; "is it nice?" for he seems to enjoy it immensely.

"Delicious!" he ejaculates, with emphasis, tossing away the stone.

"As nice as you thought it would be when you saw it in my hand just now?" she queries again, jokingly.

"Much nicer," he asserts, with every appearance of seriousness; "in fact, I do not believe I have ever eaten a sweeter peach in my life, and I have eaten a good many, too, in my time."

"It was very ripe," she puts in, quietly. "I am glad you enjoyed it so much."

"I don't quite know whether the reason why I enjoyed it so much was because of its ripeness," he says, with an air of small doubt, "Of course, that might have something to do with it, but I don't believe it was the sole and

only cause for that excessive pleasure in its consumption which I confess to feeling while I ate it."

Olive is just going to ask him what other cause there could be, when she suddenly wonders if he meant to infer some pretty speech or other, and stops herself before she opens her mouth for the injudicious query.

"Fruit is always better over ripe than not ripe enough," she says, soberly; and begins to eat one of the golden gages lying on the vine leaf before her.

"True!" he assents, briefly. "And now tell me how it is I find you here in the market-place of Quimpaire to-day? I certainly never expected to see you so far from little Pont l'Abbaye. I could hardly believe it really was you at first, which was the reason of my waiting to determine before I spoke."

"I often come over to Quimpaire on market-days with Nannette," returns Olive, nodding towards the profile bent over the knitting, still seeming oblivious of these two in conversation.

"So that is Nannette?" he says, lowering his voice in order to escape the old woman's hearing, and looking at the figure on the rush-woven seat under the awning of her little stall.

Olive nods again in answer.

"When I was watching you devouring that peach from afar, before I ventured up, and saw her sitting there, I thought perhaps it might be the—the other lady," he ends, somewhat vaguely.

"Do you mean you thought it might be Miss Daunt?" repeats the girl, with intense enjoyment in the idea, and lowering her voice top.

"How could I tell whether it was or not? I certainly did think so for a moment. You see, I did not know what Miss Daunt was like; you never described her to me," he rejoins, amusedly.

"Miss Daunt isn't—isn't half so nice as Nannette," Olive was just beginning to say, but she changed the form of her ending into—"half so old as Nannette."

"Indeed! Is she young then? My impression was that she must be old rather than young," he says, indifferently, as if it was not a matter of great moment to him whether she were youthful or aged.

"Oh, no, not at all young," rejoins Olive, quickly, "nor old either."

"A sort of betwixt and between, I suppose; a sober, steady middle-age?"

"I daresay you will see for yourself if you stay in Pont l'Abbaye any time; especially if you sketch the mill."

"Will she chase me away from the precipices, then, do you think?" he queries comically.

"I can't answer for anything Miss Daunt may or may not do," she answers, with her little, soft, sweet laugh, which he thinks infinitely pleasant to listen to.

"Well," he goes on the next moment, "since that lady sitting there knitting so benevolently out of the sun is only Nannette, there can be no reason why you should not come for a stroll round the market. I am sadly in want of a pioneer to show me all that is to be seen. You will be just the very best guide I could have, because, as you are in the habit of coming often, you will know what a tourist, or wanderer like I am, ought to look at, and what he need not trouble about. Do you mind? It would be awfully kind of you if you will," he ends, impressively.

"I don't mind in the very least," she answers, looking up at him; "and I shall be very pleased to be your guide, if you think I can show you anything you have not seen already."

"I haven't seen anything yet, for I only strolled into the market about five minutes before I saw you. I thought I would come over to Quimpaire this morning and see this wonderful old market that the guide-books rave about, so I walked from Pont l'Abbaye to Plongastel, and took the diligence from there to Quimpaire, and here you see me! So

I have not yet had time to view the lions of the town yet, have I? You are going to take compassion upon me, are you not?" he adds, with a faint imploring in his voice.

"Yes, since you really wish it," she returns, rising from her seat, and feeling a sense of pleasure at his request, which she does not take the trouble to account for.

Then she turns to the old woman, busy at her knitting while waiting for her customers.

"Nannette," says Olive, explanatorily, "I am going round the market, and perhaps into the town as well, with—with this gentleman."

For the first time since they have been carrying on their animated conversation the old woman turns her snow-white cap in the direction of the two.

"Ah!" she answers, briefly, looking at Alan Chichester keenly from head to foot.

"He is a stranger in Quimpaire, and I am going to show him what there is to be seen," adds the girl, taking up the last of the golden gages, and drinking the rest of her cup of milk.

Possibly Nannette's searching inspection of the stranger proved a satisfactory one to her inner conscience, for she nodded her head at the girl, and said, pleasantly,—

"It is well. Go then, my angel, and be back to me, my Mademoiselle Olive, in time to start on our journey home. I shall be a little later than usual to-day, for I have some little shopping to do."

"Oh! I shall not be gone long, Nannette; only just a short time," exclaims the girl, as the two move slowly off down the market between the rows of garnished stalls.

Nannette looks after them, with a smile on her old, wrinkled brown face. She has not the very faintest notion who this stranger is who has just walked off with her little mademoiselle, or how Olive became acquainted with him. She has never seen him before, or even heard of him from the girl; but that they have met before to-day she recognises as a fact. How, when, where, are at present mysteries to her.

The kind-hearted old woman is very fond of Olive. She would like to see her happy in her surroundings; that is, happier in a sense than she now is; with pleasant companions, and, perhaps a sweetheart—a *bien aimé*, as she calls it—for youth is made to be beloved, and to love again, as a natural course; and she sympathises heartily in all the girl's simple, little pleasures such as can be got at Pont l'Abbaye without Miss Daunt's interference and dissent.

Nannette is always glad to help Olive in any small way possible, even if it should be antagonistic to the strict guardian's method; and, indeed, she often rather delights in thwarting her hard discipline, for Miss Daunt is not a favourite at the mill. Neither André or Nannette like her, but then she is a good tenant to them, and is, of course, therefore entitled to some consideration, which they give her as her due.

The girl knows, however, that if she desired to indulge in any escapade, simple and innocent as it would be, she has the old man and wife on her side, ready, if necessary, to shield her, and cover her defaulting.

With all this you can understand, then, that Nannette was not by any means sorry or averse to the idea that Olive had found a pleasant acquaintance of a sudden; though how such an acquaintance had arisen, or for how long it had existed, was at present a mystery in the old woman's comprehension.

That small fact, however, did not trouble her in the very least, and she smiled very pleasantly after the two wandering off together in such friendly fashion; nodding her head in its snow-white cap eagerly to herself as she looked at their retreating figures.

"He is a beau monsieur, that one," she said to herself, once more taking up her knitting, which she had laid down while talking to Olive a moment or so back; "and the little mademoiselle looked pleased to go with him too.

Ma foi! what would our Madame Daunt say if she saw it? It is lucky she is not here. As for me, never one word will I say about it. Besides, where is the harm, I should like to know?

One can but be young just but once in one's life, that is my idea; and what is the use of being young if one cannot enjoy? When age comes, pleasure is gone for ever in that way; and love is different, quite different. I am old now, and have seen it like that always," ended the old woman, with a little sigh.

In her small way Nannette was a philosopher. She only spoke the truth when she said youth and love go hand-in-hand.

CHAPTER VII.

"What is love? It's not hereafter; Present mirth and pleasant laughter. What's to come is still unsure."

OLIVE and Alan Chichester moved away slowly over the rough stones in the Quimpaire market-place side by side.

For the space of three minutes neither of them hazarded any information one to the other, and yet each felt perfectly contented with things as they were.

Then he pulled out his cigarette case, saying,—

"You don't mind my smoking, do you?"

"Oh, no! not in the very least. I like the smell of tobacco very much," she answers, simply.

"And now, where are we going first? You are cicerone, remember, and I place myself unreservedly in your hands, to be taken wherever you choose to take me," he goes on, lighting his cigarette. "I think we have done the market sufficiently, don't you? Suppose we seek fresh pastures in search of the picturesques. What do you say?" he queries, turning his head to look at her.

She has only a fresh, buff-coloured cotton gown on, most simply made, and a plaited straw hat with a knot of buff ribbon in front of it. Nothing could be plainer or less artificial in texture and make, yet he thinks how admirably each become this pretty little thing by his side, who is so friendly and full of sweet simplicity, and still so charmingly and completely original.

"Just as you please," she rejoins at once. "If you think you have seen enough of the market would you care to go to the cathedral first? There is a very handsome altar to be seen, and a few statues."

"Anywhere!" he says, evenly. "I give myself up to my guide with implicit confidence. Whither you go I will follow after, and be very glad to do so, too," he ends up more briskly.

And without further parley on the subject of sight-seeing they wend their way to the cathedral of Saint Corentin, and duly inspect it.

Then they wander through the old paved streets of Quimpaire, where the houses almost shake hands across the road from the upper carved dormer windows; gaze into the shops, where are set out the quaint old Breton embroideries, some of which Alan goes in and buys, while Olive merrily does the bargaining for them.

It is a pleasant pilgrimage to both. The acquaintance so oddly begun is fast ripening into something akin to friendship. Already they seem to have known each other for years—not only known, but also appreciated each other.

At last their wanderings bring them down to the beautiful old quay, past which runs the Odet river, swiftly and evenly, bearing the big boats and small-sized vessels from the sea on its bosom.

"Let us rest a little time," Alan says, as they stand looking at the running water, which reflects the boats and tops of the houses dotted along its side. "Sit and look at the view, for it is lovely here; perfectly peaceful and calm! It makes one feel drowsily content; at least,

it does me. Let us rest and enjoy it. The *dolce far niente* is already stealing over me," and his grey eyes rest thoughtfully on the girl's face beside him.

"I am afraid I shall not be able to rest for very long, and enjoy the view," she rejoins, with a tinge of regret in her voice. "I have not an idea what the time is, but I am sure it must be getting on!"

"Never mind about the time!" he argues, with all a man's thoughtlessness; "we will not think about time now!"

"But I must, you see," she says, smiling. "I promised Nannette I would not be gone long, and I have been away for hours, I am certain. She will wonder where I am, and think I am lost, perhaps!"

"Not with me!" he puts in quickly; "you would be quite safe with me!"

"Possibly!" she rejoins, with a little hot flush and wrinkle of her pretty brows. "I dare say I should be, but then Nannette might not know that I was still with you. I never leave her for long, and I know that I must have been away for ages!" she adds, rather remorsefully.

"Well, let us rest for one quarter-of-an-hour. I won't ask for any longer than that," he says, quite pleadingly.

"Certainly!" she assents, demurely; "you can rest as long as ever you like, it is only I who will have to go!"

"And leave me all by myself! What dreadful cruelty to animals!" he answers, complainingly, in a quietly, reproachful tone. Why, I should never find my way back into the town again if I lost my guide! Besides, I could not possibly rest here by myself. No, when you go I shall go too! We came together, we will return together!" he ends, very decidedly.

"Well, one quarter-of-an-hour, then, just fifteen minutes from now, to look at the view," she says, sitting down on the trunk of a tree lying on the quay, waiting to be shipped away. "You have a watch, and shall time it. What is the hour now?"

"Listen! There is the cathedral clock beginning to strike. How it booms out through the air!"

"Four!" counts Olive, in dismay. "Can it be really four o'clock? Why, I ought to have been back with Nannette long before!"

"Yes, I sadly fear that cathedral clock only spoke the truth!" he returns, seating himself also on the tree-trunk beside her. "Myself, I only wish it was not four! I could begin the day all over again, or rather, our wanderings, I should say, for I own that they have, indeed, been pleasant wanderings to me!"

If he is fishing for any eager confirmation of this same sentiment on the girl's part, he must be grievously disappointed in his desire, for Olive vouchsafes nothing in return for this extremely pretty speech.

She passes it completely by, as if she had never heard it, or that he had never uttered it in such an earnest fashion.

"Does it ever strike you how oddly things come about sometimes?" he goes on, presently, meditatively gazing at the water sliding past the quiet old quay. "Now, who would have thought, four days ago—only four days, mind!—that you and I would be sitting here on the Quimpaire quay at this present moment? Why, we had not a notion even of our different existences four days back! And now it seems strange to think that there was a time when we did not know each other. At least, it does to me."

"Yes," says the girl, briefly, "only four days ago! It is a very short time."

And she thought to herself, if I had not stayed that night by the river I should not have picked up that sketch-book, and probably never have known him at all. He was right when he said things came about oddly sometimes!

"Short!" he repeats after her; "it seems quite a long time to me, quite far back in the past! As I said before, we seem to have known each other for years instead of only

days—just three fleeting days! Only think of it?"

"So I do!" she answers, quaintly; "I have thought about it a good many times!"

"Have you?" he rejoins, turning his head once more to look at her instead of the river, and she fancies the grey eyes look pleased at her candour. "And did it not seem strange to you? But perhaps you are not prone to look at circumstances in the same light!" he amends, as a finish to his speech.

"I don't exactly know that I have thought it especially strange," she answers, emphasising the last word of her sentence.

"What then? How do you look upon it? Not as a disagreeable fact, I hope?"

"Oh no, not disagreeable by any means," she says, quickly. "Do not think I mean that. On the contrary, I think—I think it rather a pleasant fact than not."

She half repents her words the moment they have passed her lips, but, having been uttered, they cannot be recalled.

"I agree with you," he puts in at once; "it is not strange, it's pleasant. Let me add very pleasant as better still, if I may, without risking offending you by my plain speaking."

"I am not so easily offended," returns Olive, with a fine smile on her lips.

"No; I do not think you are. I imagine you much too frank and ingenuous a young lady to be quickly offended," approvingly.

"Do not credit me with too many good qualities, please," she says, with the faintest shrug.

"Why not?"

"Why! Because I probably do not deserve them," she answers, half-jokingly, half in earnest.

"But I may credit you with being frank and ingenuous, for you most certainly are both. They are not too good qualities to be true, I am sure. Do not undervalue yourself; it is always a mistake in this world. The more one thinks of oneself, the more others will think of one. It sounds a very egotistical kind of doctrine, I daresay, but it does not make it any the less true for all that. Look at me," he goes on, comically; "I never lose an opportunity of blowing my own trumpet. I believe I am one of the most conceited of men in that way."

"Are you?" says Olive, smiling. "Well, of course, I do not know you sufficiently to either contradict you or agree with you. But, by the little I have seen of you, I should not have thought that you were very conceited."

"I should very much like to know what you really do think of me?" he hazards the next moment, leaning his elbows on his knees, and contemplating the girl's face with much interest.

"Would you!" she returns slowly, the rosy red coming swiftly into her soft cheeks.

"Yes, indeed, I should very much like to know. Tell me," he ends, still gazing intently at her.

"Oh! no, no! I could not," and she laughs a little soft, confused laugh.

"But why could you not? I should not mind what you thought of me, really. Is it so bad that you cannot tell me then?"

"No—not bad!" she says, low-voiced.

"I shall think you have an awfully bad opinion of me if you don't," he urges once more; "and I shall go back to Pont l'Abbaye with a heavy heart, a sadder if not a wiser man."

Olive laughs again.

"What do you want me to say?" she begins, doubtfully.

"The truth, only the truth. I shall not mind how terrible the verdict is, because I have begged the question of you, and must abide consequently by the answer with a good grace. I only ask you for the truth," impressively.

"Well," she commences, with an effort, the rosy flush still in the ascendent, and keeping her eyes fixed steadfastly on the flowing water close to their feet, "I think you are rather—nice!"

She begins bravely enough in her usual tone, but the "nice" ends in a murmur. Then she jumps to her feet.

"Listen! it's chiming the three-quarters," she says, hurriedly; "one whole half-hour more than we agreed upon. I had no idea the time was going so fast. I must hurry back at once; Nannette will be in a dreadful way about me. You ought to have reminded me when the quarter of an hour was over. You did not keep faith with me as you promised," she adds, with affected reproach to cover her confusion.

He looks up at her standing before him, as she finishes her small reproach.

"Does one ever think of time when one is happy?" he says, slowly. "This afternoon has passed like a dream. You are not going. Stay a little longer, another quarter of an hour—only until five o'clock; it will soon be here now."

She shakes her head quickly.

"Not a minute longer," she rejoins, decidedly; "I have stayed too long already. I must be off this instant. Good-bye!"

"I am coming, too," he says, ignoring her projected farewell; "since you are such a determined young lady, and will go at once, so be it," rising slowly from his seat on the tree-trunk. "As I said before, we came together and we will return together. I could not think of letting you fly back to the market through Quimpare by yourself. Nannette might then justly blame me, and say I did not know how to take care of young demoiselles confided to my charge."

"Come then, let us make haste," answers Olive. "I want to get back as quick as ever we possibly can."

And she hurries off as swiftly as her small feet will carry her, while Alan strides on evenly by her side, keeping pace with her half trot.

Neither of the two speak as they hurry on through the quaint old streets of the town. After all, it is really but a short distance with such rapid walking, which earlier in the afternoon they had spun out so pleasantly.

The silence is not irksome in the smallest degree; it only seems as if there was no time for talking now. At the entrance of the market-place Alan stops short.

"I have seen you safe so far," he begins, first to break the silence. "I will not come any further with you, for I intend walking back to Pont l'Abbaye, and shall start on the road at once. It's only nine miles, I believe, and will be a delightful walk now the cooler part of the day has begun. You, of course, are going to drive back, or shall you go by the diligence which starts in about an hour's time?"

"Not by the diligence. Nannette will drive me back in her cart—I came with her; unless she has gone off disgusted with me, and leaves me behind as a punishment for my offence. But I do not think that is very likely, I own. Nannette is too fond of me to do that," Olive ends, with conviction.

"I am not surprised," he says, quietly, looking down at her. "Well, if you are driving back to Pont l'Abbaye I suppose we shall both traverse the same road, and you will probably pass me on the way. I shall look out for you. Good-bye!" and he holds out his hand.

This time Olive does not hesitate one moment, but gives him hers in return as a natural sequence of events.

"I have had a very charming afternoon," he goes on, holding it in his—longer, perhaps, than is strictly necessary to the occasion,

"And so have I," candidly affirms the girl, in response.

Why should she be behindhand in courtesy and expression of pleasure in their joint wander?

"I am glad to hear you say so," he says, still in a quiet voice, "and—and thank you for your good opinion of me," releasing her hand.

Olive recognises that he is now speaking of her encomium "Nice!" with which she had

endowed him in answer to his question as to what she really thought of him, and she does not feel sure whether she is glad or sorry she told him the unvarnished truth.

"Do you call it good?" she queries, with a little embarrassed laugh.

"Don't you? Is not to be 'nice' the *summum bonum* of approval? I think so myself, and glory in being called nice. You have not asked me in return what I think of you!" he goes on, quite gravely. "Perhaps, though, you do not care much about knowing one way or the other?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" she answers, with a shade of earnestness in her face. "Of course I would rather people liked than disliked me."

"I don't think they could dislike you, even if they tried," he puts in, suavely.

"I am not so very certain about that," rejoins the girl, with a half-laugh.

"I am sure I could not," Alan says, in that same quiet tone of voice which seems natural to him.

"Good-night!" answers Olive, quickly, with a kind of start, as if until this moment she had been day-dreaming, and only now awoke to the remembrance of poor old patient Nannette waiting for her, no doubt wondering where on earth her little mademoiselle had disappeared to.

"And so the day ends!" he reflects, thoughtfully, as they stand facing each other. "This one summer day is done, and nothing remains of it but to say good-night and good-bye! How short time really is when one comes to think about it—pleasant time, I mean—and then comes good-bye to show us how short-lived it is! At any rate, I shall see you again soon. Pont l'Abbaye is not such an immense place that one can fail to meet one's fellow sooner or later. I can look forward to another meeting without a doubt as to its probability. Can I not?"

"Oh, yes! Perhaps!" murmurs Olive, hurriedly. "Good-bye again!" and with a little movement of her head in his direction she runs off, and down the old market-place, not without some small inward misgiving on the subject of her lateness.

However, Nannette is there still, and has not driven away, leaving her to her fate. Indeed, such an idea never really presented itself as a possible fact to the girl's mind, even when she said it to Alan, for she knew Nannette far too well for that.

The old woman was sitting on her rush-seat, calmly waiting for her; knitting, it is true, because she cannot bear being idle even for a few minutes in the day, but market is over long since, most of the stalls are shut up for that week, and all Nannette's baskets are packed, and lie waiting for their departure.

"Oh, Nannette! I am so sorry!" Olive begins, a little out of breath, and with genuine regret in her voice.

The old woman's face shows no vexation of any kind whatever, but beams round pleasantly on the offender in perfect forgiveness.

"Sorry for what, my mademoiselle?" Nannette queries, smiling to herself as she asks.

"Because I have been gone so long, and when I promised to be back soon, too! But I had no idea it was so late, Nannette. I had not, indeed," exclaims Olive, earnestly.

"It is of no matter, my mademoiselle!" returns the old woman placidly, "just a little longer to wait, that is all. I have not wasted my time, as you see; André's stocking is almost done, and I am not tired."

"You are a dear old thing not to scold me," says the girl, caressingly. "I know that I do deserve a scolding all the same."

"But you are alone," begins Nannette quietly, folding up her knitting and placing it in a basket by her side, "how comes it? Where, then, is monsieur?"

"Oh! monsieur as you call him is by this time on the road to Pont l'Abbaye; he intends to walk back," Olive answers, with a slight laugh. "He came back with me as far as the market just now."

"And what takes him to Pont l'Abbaye?" questions Nannette once more.

"He is staying there now. I believe at the hotel *Pomme d'Or*!"

"Tell me, my mademoiselle, who is this monsieur?" queries the old woman, after a small pause in the conversation.

"As far as I know at present, Nannette, he is a gentleman, and his name is Alan Chichester!" returns Olive lightly.

"And how do you come to know him?" says Nannette, finally.

Olive at once relates her experience on the evening of her row down the river to Sablette and back, and what happened on her return.

"Ah!" commented the old woman reflectively, when the girl had finished her little historiette of that evening. "And the next day you saw him, you say?"

"Yes! I went to see his sketch as he asked me. There was no harm, Nannette, was there?" says Olive, rather anxiously.

The old woman smiles.

"No harm, my mademoiselle; and since you wished to go and see monsieur's sketch, there could be nothing to say. Madame Rebecca, does she also know of this monsieur?" and Nannette slightly lifted her brows in an inquiring fashion as she uttered her query.

"Oh, no!" answers Olive very quickly; "if I had told her she would not have let me go. You know that."

"Well," says Nannette, slowly, "if I thought it harmful for you, I should tell madame without a doubt; but I do not!"

Which sentence Olive knew meant to say that Nannette certainly would not inform against her, come what might.

"And to-day is then the third time you have seen monsieur?" goes on the old woman, gathering up her baskets in her arms preparatory to a move.

"Yes, Nannette," assents the girl, softly, with just a tiny red flush in her cheeks.

"But it will not be the last, no-doubt, since he is at Pont l'Abbaye. Ah! well, a friend is a pleasant thing. It is time you saw a few fresh faces, my mademoiselle, and this one is handsome enough. I do not know what madame will say when she discovers"—with a shrug—"but we will not think of that now. Come, my dear one, it is getting to evening; we must go."

Then they gather up the rest of the baskets, Olive carrying a few, too, and pack them away in the little cart standing waiting for them, with Bruno looking more like a stuffed quadruped in a museum than a living, breathing animal.

Very soon after they are jogging back along the hard, white, coiling, dusty road, which is very quiet now, for all the market carts have traversed it long since; and Bruno, not being the swiftest of mules, is not likely to catch even the last one up.

At last Olive, who has been on the watch the whole way, sees a figure on in front, walking swiftly along the same road they are travelling. He must have been walking very fast to have got on so far.

Perhaps he hears the sound of Bruno's jog-trot on the hard road coming behind him, for he stops, turns, and waits for them to come up.

"Here you are at last!" he sings out pleasantly, as the cart reaches him. "I began to think you were never coming. I've walked about five miles now, I think."

"Perhaps monsieur would like to ride the rest of the way?" Nannette suggests to Olive. "If he does not mind this little cart and Bruno's slowness he is very welcome."

Olive repeats the suggestion half laughingly. He will not care to ride in an old market cart; I am sure, she thinks as she says it; and consequently feels rather surprised when he accepts the offer with some alacrity.

"Thanks, very much!" he answers; "I shall be very glad to ride behind Bruno, if he won't consider me an intrusion and too heavy a burden. It is getting dusk now; all the

beauty of the evening is going. I have enjoyed the best of it already during my five-mile walk out of Quimperre. Shall I get up behind? Don't move those baskets for me, I shall be quite comfortable as I am," and he steps up quickly into the little quaintly built country cart, just behind Olive.

Then Nannette intimates to Bruno that they are ready to go on once more, and Bruno makes a move.

It is quite dusk when they reach Pont l'Abbaye, and Alan gets out just at the corner where the roads diverge off—one to the mill, and the other to the village. The latter half of the journey seems to have been quite short, somehow.

Alan thanks Nannette effusively for his ride, declaring that he had no idea until to-day how comfortable a market cart could be.

The old woman accepts his thanks with a twinkle of amusement in her eyes. If I had been alone, he would not have found it so comfortable doubtless, she thinks to herself, with a very shrewd hit at the truth, for Nannette has all her wits about her, and some of other peoples too, I think.

Olive is very silent, as the two, after leaving Alan to go his own way, drive down the small bit of grass-grown road leading to the water-mill. As they reach the gate where a great sweet chestnut-tree spreads its gaunt arms over the road, she involuntarily heaves the faintest of small sighs, hardly noting that she does so.

"Why do you sigh, my mademoiselle?" asks the old woman, whose sharp ears have caught the sound as it floated by.

"Did I sigh, Nannette?" answers the girl, thoughtfully. "I did not know it. I don't know why I should sigh, I am sure. I have nothing to sigh for, have I?"

"Not yet, certainly, dear one," says Nannette sagaciously nodding her white cap; "for the future, who can tell. We must all sigh sometimes in our lives. For me I have sighed much—yes, and laughed too. It is never all bitter, or all sweet. We can but sigh and laugh in turn. You will find it true, as I say."

Nannette spoke truly enough, when she said we must all sigh and laugh in turn, but she forgot one thing. Sighs do not always come from a troubled breast, or sorrowing heart.

There is the sigh of—Love!

(To be continued.)

HIGHLAND KINDNESS.—This man, says a writer, might serve as a type of Highland kindness. He was a crofter living with his mother and widowed sister some two miles away. Some years he went fishing to eke out his means, for three summers he came to us as boatman and gillie, and a kinder, more devoted servant could not be. Nothing in the way of helpful service came amiss to him. He would construct a raft or rig an old washing tub, under the imperious orders of an ardent young shipbuilder of nine years old; he would garden; he was admirable at a picnic, managing a spirit-lamp apparatus for making tea with a tact and patience never since equalled; he carried the wraps and remembered the umbrellas; he led the ponies round the soft places, and one day, when I was not well, insisted without my knowledge (indeed I only heard of it by accident some time afterwards) on sitting up all night in the kitchen to be ready to take the boat across the loch for the doctor, should I be worse. And all this with a beautiful courtesy. Indeed, it is this courtesy, combined with a natural refinement, that makes Highland servants so delightful—the women are ladies and the men are gentlemen. The services they render affect one as kindnesses done by a friend, and having once had experience of them, one understands plainly the expressions of friendship and gratitude used by the Queen in speaking of her Highland servant, John Brown.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS REWARD.

CHAPTER I.

"Do you expect all your guests to put in an appearance to-day, Maggie?" inquired Clifford Dacre from his position upon the drawing-room hearth-rug, where he stood leisurely roasting himself in front of the blazing wood fire.

"Yes, they are almost sure to come by the next train," was the softly-spoken reply. "I shall send both the brake and the carriage to the station for them. The men will prefer coming in the brake, but the carriage will be more comfortable for Lord and Lady Chippendale, and Susie Heath. I hope Susie will behave nicely for once, and not scandalise the Chippendales while they are here by flirting with every man she meets. She is such a wild girl."

Clifford Dacre only laughed.

"She's a jolly little thing," he remarked admiringly, "and she can't help flirting any more than she can help breathing. It comes natural to her."

"Elinor must help me to keep her in order," said Mrs. Dacre, a plump brown-eyed placid woman, some five years older than her husband. "What with the theatricals and the fancy dress ball, I don't think there will be much time for either of the girls to get into mischief."

"If we are snowed up—and there's every appearance of it at present—we shall be at our wits' end to keep such a lot of people amused. The ball and the theatricals are all very well so far as they go, but they are only night affairs. There's the day to be thought of as well. Coming from town, men and women are apt to find the country dull if they are left too much to their own devices."

"Oh, if the worst comes to the worst, we must fall back upon round games, or dig our way through the snow and make up a surprise party, and take poor Sir Philip by storm. That sort of thing is quite the rage in Paris now, I hear."

"Confounded bad taste!" growled her husband. "Hate to be taken by surprise myself. Where are you going to put Falconer, Maggie? I want him to have a good room."

"I've given him the Blue-room. He will be very comfortable there."

"It's got a northern aspect though. Put him up in Guy's quarters, since they happen to be vacant."

"But Guy is coming back to-day," said Mrs. Dacre, deprecatingly. "I had a letter from him this morning, but I quite forgot to mention it to you."

"Confound the fellow! he is always turning up where he is least wanted!" exclaimed her husband, savagely. "I'll make the place too hot to hold him, before long. In fairness to me, Uncle Roger should have disinherited Guy altogether when he was about it. I can hardly regard the Abbey as my own while that fellow has a right to remain in it, and occupy some of the best rooms. I'll take care that he gets nothing beyond his rights, by Jove! I will!"

"I think you are rather unreasonable, Clifford," Mrs. Dacre ventured to remark. "If Guy had not offended his uncle by refusing to marry Madge Barclay he would have been master here instead of you, remember. Your Uncle Roger never cared for you, and he only altered his will in your favour after he had quarrelled with Guy."

"I know all about that," said Clifford Dacre, shortly. "Since the old man chose to make me his heir, though, he might have left me the estate free of all incumbrance. I only inherit on the condition that I allow Guy Singleton to stay here and occupy a set of apartments in the Abbey as long as he cares to remain. I hate the fellow, and yet I am powerless to turn him out. Who ever heard

of a man inheriting under such vexatious circumstances? Uncle Roger must have been in his dotage when he made that will."

"Guy does not trouble us much," said Mrs. Dacre soothingly, "and he is really a very nice young man. I can't imagine why you should dislike him so much, Clifford."

"Oh, of course, you, like every one else, are ready to sing his praise," retorted her husband, angrily. Clifford Dacre was a burly, square-built young man with light hair and eyebrows, a short thick neck, and a pinkish complexion. He bullied his stable boys and his wife indiscriminately, and he felt far more at home among his dogs and horses than in a fashionable drawing-room. His general appearance, indeed, would have led any one to imagine him distantly related to a bulldog, the likeness between them was so apparent.

"Guy is the favourite, and I am nowhere," he continued, roughly. "The servants who take my money all idolise him. They would rather serve him than me any day. In society too, it is just the same. Poor Guy Singleton's pitied and received everywhere. People only tolerate me by reason of the position that I occupy."

"If you excite yourself too much, Clifford, you will have a rush of blood to your head again," said his wife, calmly, sorting her crewels, in no wise discomposed by his loud tones.

"I can't help it. The mention of that fellow's name is quite enough to throw me into a passion. I thought he was going to spend Christmas in town? What does he want to come back for just now, Maggie?"

Mrs. Dacre smiled meaningfully.

"Elinor Campbell is coming to-day," she replied. "Unless I am very much mistaken Guy wishes to meet her here. They have always had a *tendresse* for each other. I wonder if it will ripen into an engagement?"

Clifford Dacre regarded his better half with an incredulous stare.

"Of course it won't," he said, contemptuously. "A clever handsome girl like Elinor Campbell would hardly throw herself away upon a pauper, and Guy is nothing else. You are talking sheer nonsense."

"Well, we shall see," rejoined the placid little woman. "She might do better than marry Guy, but he has a decided claim upon her."

"How?"

"If he had not cared so much for her he would have married Madge Barclay, and Belmont Abbey would still have been his."

"A good thing for us that he preferred love to money," was the sneering reply. "His loss has been our gain. If Elinor gets a first-rate offer it won't take her long to throw him over though, claim or no claim. That girl's as proud as Lucifer. Nothing less than a title will satisfy her requirements."

"Love can work wonders," said Mrs. Dacre, with a little sigh: such a scanty portion had been dealt out to her, poor soul.

Clifford Dacre left the room without vouchsafing any reply to such an absurd remark, horse-flesh being more in his line than love.

His wife laid aside her art-needlework and gave her orders to the coachman. Then she went on a little tour of inspection through the rooms, to see for herself that all was in readiness for her guests.

Fire had been lighted in the large airy bedrooms, replete with every modern luxury and convenience. The ruddy blaze gleamed upon soft thick carpets, eider-down quilts, pretty toilet-sets, and crimson hangings. Subdued richness, artistic effects, met the eye in every direction.

The requirements and comfort of the expected guests had been carefully studied. Mrs. Dacre could discover no detail that had been neglected, and she returned to the drawing-room in a peaceful and contented frame of mind.

"They won't be long now," she remarked to herself, as she stood by the window, a

plump, cosy little figure in a dark-blue velvet gown, slashed and puffed with deepest red.

"It will be pleasant for me to have some people staying in the house. Clifford is such poor company. He never speaks without grumbling about something or somebody."

She looked round the spacious artistically-furnished room with a glance of approval and satisfaction. It would appear very pleasant to people entering it after a long, cold drive, with its blazing wood fires and hot-house flowers.

A soft atmosphere of ease, wealth and elegance seemed to pervade it. The grand piano, open and strewn with music, the new books and Christmas numbers lying about on the many little tables, the high-art glass and pottery, the Japanese cabinets, the carved brackets on the walls holding fragile cups and saucers, all combined to form a picture of home-life and comfort.

Mrs. Dacre could but acknowledge to herself that her lines had fallen in pleasant places.

"The Abbey and all pertaining to it is ours by right," she reflected, wistfully. "And yet I cannot get rid of a disagreeable idea that we are defrauding Guy. He must look upon us as interlopers, only he is too well-bred to say so. I wish Clifford would treat him differently. Were I to say anything, though, I should only make bad matters worse. He hates me to speak a word in Guy's favour. Clifford," going to the door and calling her husband, "the brake is coming up the avenue."

"All right," said Clifford, curtly. "We may bid good-bye to peace and quietness for the next three weeks at any rate."

As if in answer to his words a loud peal and a resounding knock echoed throughout the Abbey. Three men in long ulsters jumped down from the brake, and a pleasant hubbub of talk, laughter and greeting, took place in the hall.

"How do, Falconer? Glad to see you!" said Clifford Dacre, extending his hand to a tall, military-looking man, with unusual heartiness.

Captain Falconer, of the 9th Hussars, had but one elderly, gouty life intervening between him and a peerage. Consequently, in Clifford Dacre's opinion, his was an acquaintance worth cultivating.

"You see I have arrived in very bad company, Mrs. Dacre," remarked the captain, turning with a smile to his hostess. "A barrister on either side of me; can you imagine a worse situation for an honest man to be placed in?"

"Don't abuse the profession, Val," cried Bertie Cavendish, a young barrister who had agreed to divide any brief that might fall to his share with his sworn friend and ally, Ned Lawrence. The brief not being forthcoming, however, the embryo, Q.C.'s consoled themselves meanwhile by giving nice little suppers in their chambers, and conducting mock cases just to keep their hand in; the cases, not the suppers, being regarded by them in the light of legal work.

"No, I won't abuse it, old fellow," said Captain Falconer, lightly; "there are abuses enough connected with the law already."

"Have you seen anything of Lord and Lady Chippendale?" inquired Mrs. Dacre.

"Yes, they're following on behind in the carriage," said Ned Lawrence. "There's a young lady with them, a very pretty girl."

"It hasn't taken you long to find that out, Master Ned!" said Clifford Dacre. "The pretty girl happens to be my wife's cousin."

"I beg a thousand pardons!" rejoined Ned, penitently. "I wasn't aware—"

"Never mind," laughed Mrs. Dacre, "Susie, I am sure, will forgive you."

"Here they come!" said Captain Falconer, from his coign of vantage near the window; "with a battered 'growler' bringing up the rear."

"That ancient vehicle doubtless contains the lady's maid and the parrot," remarked

Bertie Cavendish. "Her ladyship never travels without those precious appendages."

Lord and Lady Chippendale, who presently entered the drawing-room, created a fresh diversion. Behind them came a pretty dark-eyed girl, in a travelling-dress of cream velvet trimmed with fur, and a coquettish Tam-o'-Shanter cap, with a gold heron and plume fastened at the side.

"We nearly lost the train," said her ladyship, a stout, middle-aged blonde. "Lord Chippendale pretends to understand Bradshaw, and, in consequence, we always reach the station an hour before or after the proper time. This morning we were just fortunate enough to be pushed into a carriage at the last moment before starting. Poor Lawkins and the parrot nearly slipped down between the train and the platform! It frightened me almost out of my senses. I haven't got over it yet!"

No man likes to be told that he doesn't understand Bradshaw. Lord Chippendale, a tall, thin, yellow-complexioned man, looked viciously at his wife, and made some sarcastic remark respecting the state of her nerves.

Mrs. Dacre, aware of the Chippendales' habit of constantly pecking at one another, hastened to change the subject, and the conversation became general.

"I thought perhaps Elinor might have come by this train," she presently observed. "I must send the carriage to meet the next; she is sure to come by that."

"Oh! do you expect her? I am so glad!" cried Susie Heath. "I shall not be the maiden all forlorn then. Elinor and I have not met since she left home to go to Girton College. I wonder if she has become very blue?"

"I don't care for female savants myself," said Bertie Cavendish, in a whisper. "I am half-afraid of them. I shall look to you for protection, Miss Heath."

"When Elinor is present you won't remember my existence!" replied Susie. "She extinguishes me as the sun extinguishes a farthing rushlight, and yet I am very fond of her. What a noble nature mine must be!"

"Very; but learning can never throw beauty in the shade. At least, I shall not allow it to do so."

"Wait till you have seen Elinor before you pay me any compliments," said Susie, demurely.

Twilight was setting in when the carriage returned from the station for the second time that day.

All Clifford Dacre's guests came forward to welcome the tall, slender girl, muffled in furs, who emerged from it.

Winsome and lovely, Elinor Campbell seemed to carry sunshine and gladness with her wherever she went.

She might have stood for the ideal girl-graduate, only her hair was not golden, but brown, waving in short soft tresses round her shapely head and broad white forehead; large, dark blue eyes and regular features, full of animated expression, added to the charm of voice and manner that she possessed.

Her father had at one time been vicar of Belmont, and she loved to revisit her old home. Her mother and Mrs. Dacre had been close friends.

But for that fact she would have been less willing to stay at the Abbey, for she disliked Clifford Dacre, chiefly because he had succeeded to the estate instead of Guy Singleton.

The latter, who arrived by another train, plodded to the Abbey on foot, through the dreary December night. No conveyance was sent to meet him.

Clifford Dacre would have been furious with his wife had she even suggested such a thing.

Guy, who had once been master of all, now received less attention than the meanest guest.

CHAPTER II.

After getting a little information from the old butler concerning his cousin's guests, Guy Singleton went at once to his rooms in the west wing, and dressed for dinner.

The unsatisfactory and anomalous position in which he found himself placed through the will of a despotic old man had produced a bad effect upon his sunny, genial disposition. A moody, irritable look frequently rested upon his handsome face, and his words, too, frequently expressed the bitterness of spirit that he felt.

Brought up in luxurious indolence, with the understanding that Belmont Abbey would one day be his, it had been a cruel blow to Guy Singleton to fall from his high estate, and stand aside to give place to Clifford Dacre, the cousin whom, even as a boy, he had always disliked, and for whom he now entertained the bitterest hatred.

Had he but consented to wed the plain-faced, awkward girl that perverse old Roger Belmont had selected for him he would have been master of Belmont Abbey instead of Clifford Dacre.

Guy had refused, however, to obey his uncle's peremptory command, and the old man had disinherited him in consequence.

Some odd, fanciful impulse had prompted the octogenarian to saddle the magnificent legacy he bequeathed to Clifford Dacre with the proviso that Guy, the disinherited nephew, should be permitted to occupy three rooms in the west wing for the term of his natural existence.

Some lingering love for Guy may have induced him to add this codicil to his will, or, perhaps, the desire to annoy Clifford Dacre, and damp his pleasure on succeeding to the estate alone, influenced him in making it.

Like King Gama, in *Princess Ida*, Roger Belmont was "a disagreeable man," and a malicious motive had not unfrequently lurked at the bottom of his most important actions.

Without any profession to fall back upon, with only two hundred a-year that he had inherited from his mother, Guy Singleton had been compelled to occupy the rooms thus left at his disposal, much as he disliked living under the same roof with Clifford Dacre.

The latter had tried to insult him on more than one occasion in order to get rid of him, and provoke him into leaving the Abbey. But Guy, to serve his own ends, had contrived to keep his temper.

After a short absence in town he had returned to the Abbey, as he firmly believed, for the last time, drawn there by the powerful magnet of love.

If Elinor Campbell would only consent to go to Canada with him as his wife a bright, hopeful future might then be in store for them both. His income would be of use to him out there, while at home it hardly served to pay his tailor's bills.

As a boy Guy had always loved Elinor Campbell. Many a long pleasant hour they had spent together, singing duets, or reading the works of their favourite authors beneath the shade of some wide-spreading tree.

Elinor's manner had changed towards him, though, as she grew older. She treated him much as an impudent young queen, spoiled by excessive homage, might behave towards a loyal and devoted subject.

When she had brought him to the verge of rebellion a relenting word or look on her part would then restore him to his allegiance, rivet the chains that she had thrown around him firmly than ever.

But Guy, in spite of his great love, was tired of being played with. He yearned to turn his life to some account—useless, purposeless waiting chafed and irritated him.

Mrs. Dacre had told him that Elinor would be among her guests, and he had returned to the home that should have been his for the purpose of obtaining a final and decisive answer to his frequently urged suit from the wilful, perplexing girl.

"If Nell refuses me I'll go to San Francisco and turn gold-digger," he said to himself, as he went downstairs. "Perhaps some one will be kind enough to put a bullet through me before I have been there long. Such an ending would be quite in harmony with the rest of my unlucky career."

Mrs. Dacre gave him a timid but friendly greeting when he entered the drawing-room. Clifford Dacre pretended not to see him. Accustomed to meet with rudeness in that quarter, he made his way to the ottoman upon which Elinor was seated, determined to ignore his cousin as completely as that gentleman had ignored him.

"Miss Campbell, may I have the pleasure of taking you down to dinner?"

It was but a commonplace speech for an impassioned lover to make; time and place, however, were against his saying anything else.

Elinor started slightly at the deep, rich, musical voice, that had so often accompanied her own fell upon her ear.

"Fate and our hostess must decide that question for me," she replied, lifting her dark blue eyes to his face for a moment, and then dropping them again. "I may be destined for some other partner."

"In that case I will not press my claim," he said, coldly, trying to hide the disappointment and annoyance that he felt.

For weeks past he had been looking forward to this meeting. Now it had come what an unsatisfactory thing it was! Elinor's manner towards him had never been more chill and repelling.

He could not tell that she had missed him and cried a little over his absence in the privacy of her own dressing-room; that she had experienced a thrill of delight on hearing of his return. The ways of women are unscrutable, and certainly her looks and words did not betoken the existence of any covert tenderness or love.

Sick at heart he turned away from her, and carried on a lively conversation with Lady Chippendale. That blonde dame went down to dinner leaning on his arm, Elinor Campbell having been paired off with Captain Falconer.

Little Mrs. Dacre beamed upon her guests from the bottom of the long table. Some of the Belmont diamonds shone upon her white neck and arms, and in the coils of her brown hair.

There was a romantic story connected with those diamonds. Roger Belmont had purchased them when a young man for the beautiful girl to whom he was about to be married. She had died suddenly on the eve of what should have been their wedding-day, and all the happiness he had looked forward to enjoying died with her. The diamonds, worth more than ten thousand pounds, had been laid aside for many years, and Mrs. Dacre had been the first to wear them.

On rejoining the ladies in the drawing-room Guy Singleton made one more effort to break through Elinor's strange reserve.

"Will you sing something?" he inquired, bending over her until his face was on a level with her own. "It would give me so much pleasure to listen. Have you forgotten our German duets of old? 'Batti, batti,' from your lips, would sound inexpressibly sweet."

"Not to-night," she replied, languidly. "Some other time; I am feeling tired now and rather hoarse."

Ten minutes later, to Guy's pain and mortification, he beheld Elinor led to the piano by Sir Philip Stewart, a neighbouring landowner, at whose request she sang song after song.

"She would not sing to gratify me," he reflected, bitterly, "yet she has given Stewart as much music as he cared to ask her for. Is she turning away from me on account of my poverty, like the rest of the world? Well, tomorrow will see my suspense at an end, one way or the other. It is beneath the dignity of a man humbly to sue for the love of a woman

who persistently strives to wound and defy him."

Guy Singleton's opportunity came on the following morning. Elinor was in the conservatory selecting a flower to wear in her hair that night, and fortunately she happened to be alone.

Mrs. Dacre's conservatory, through artistic taste and arrangement, had been converted into a veritable fairyland.

Small fountains played in ferny nooks; groups of statuary gleamed from amidst the luxuriant foliage; a tangle of jessamine and passion-flowers concealed the roof, while at night coloured lamps shed their soft, chastened glow on the falling water and the marble floor.

"Is it not a lovely place?" said Elinor, surveying it with appreciative eyes. Mrs. Dacre must spend a small fortune upon her conservatory!"

"Very likely, but her expenditure does not concern me," rejoined Guy, indifferently. "I do not care to discuss the Dacres or their doings. I wish to speak to you upon a very different subject."

"What splendid orchids! Have you noticed them?" she asked, trying hard to put off the evil moment.

"Yes, they are nice enough," he replied, impatiently. "I did not come here to talk to you about orchids though, Elinor. I want to know if you care enough for me to go with me to Canada as my wife. We may have to rough it a little at first, but in the end we are almost sure to succeed, and your happiness will always be my first thought. Nell, darling, will you link your fate with mine and render me the proudest of men, with an object in living, and a loved one to work for?"

Elinor's lovely face flushed and paled alternately as he spoke. Then she drew herself away from him with a little silvery laugh.

"Don't be ridiculous, Guy," she said, pleadingly. "My going to Canada with you is out of the question. Of what use should I be when I got there? Logic and the higher mathematics would avail me but little in a place where baking and brewing constitute a woman's chief accomplishments. You must be very silly, or very much in love, even to propose such a thing."

"You care nothing for me, then? You have been leading me on all this time for your own amusement!" he cried, indignantly.

"I do care for you," she said, slowly, "and you know it."

"Then why not consent to go with me to Canada?"

"Because I am not suitable for a poor man's wife. I should be a dead weight upon him, dragging him down instead of helping him to rise. Guy, you may think me selfish and worldly, but I can give you no other answer."

"I do not wish to reproach you," he said, very gently, with a ring of pain in his voice that she did not fail to detect; "and yet, since you have spoken thus, I cannot help reminding you that, but for the love I bore you, I might even now call Belmont Abbey my own. I remained faithful to my ideal woman at a terrible expense, and this is my reward."

Elinor broke down and cried.

"Oh, Guy! what can I do?" she said, tearfully. "I know what you have sacrificed on my account, and I hate myself because I am not brave enough to face poverty, even with your strong arm around me. Papa's living is such a poor one, and they expect so much from me at home, after the splendid education I have received. You and I must not think of becoming engaged, since fortune has been so unkind to us both."

"Elinor."

"Yes, Guy."

"Will you pledge yourself to wait a year,

only one short year, to see what I am able to do? If at the end of that time I am rich enough to satisfy your requirements you will consent to marry me?"

"But, Guy, people don't grow rich in a year,

and you have no profession, no means of earning money!"

"There are ways and means of which you are ignorant," she continued, earnestly, "short cuts to wealth that other men have trod successfully, and why not I? Will you promise not to engage yourself to anyone else for the space of a year?"

"Very well, I promise," she said with a smile. "I am not likely to receive more than a dozen offers during the time. I fear that I am only encouraging groundless hopes, though. What can you do in twelve short months?"

"That is my affair," he replied, doggedly. "I do not anticipate failure. Only be true to me, Nell, and leave your heart in my keeping. You are sure that you love me, and me alone?"

"You foolish fellow! Yes."

"Give me just one kiss then to seal our agreement."

"No, that would be almost the same as if we were engaged," she said firmly, "and we are not engaged. I have only pledged myself to wait a year for you. You must be content with what I have already conceded."

But she gave him a flower instead, and he put it carefully away in his pocket-book.

The Canadian project was thrown aside as far too slow and plodding, while schemes for amassing speedy wealth, wild and chimerical as the dreams that haunt a feverish brain, occupied Guy Singleton's mind.

(To be continued.)

A DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT.—A genuine child of the regiment is said to live at St. Petersburg, whose fate shows that the Russian soldiers are not all as stony-hearted as they are sometimes painted. In 1877 a Russian regiment, after a hard struggle, took and invaded the Turkish town Hermanly. The inhabitants had mostly fled, but one of the Russian soldiers, in searching among the ruins for booty, came upon a beautiful young girl about five years old, who looked at the soldier with tears in her large black eyes. The soldier pitied the child, took it along and showed it to the officers, who soon raised a subscription of five thousand roubles, and sent the child to St. Petersburg to a school for girls. She is now a charming Oriental beauty of thirteen, and it is surmised that out of gratitude she will marry one of the officers who provided for her. Recently, at a special festive occasion, she sent a telegram: "I congratulate my dear uncles heartily."

DOG DIGNITY.—Sir Walter Scott declared that he could believe anything of dogs. He was very fond of them, studied their idiosyncrasies, wrote much in their praise, and told many stories of their strange habits. Once, he said, he desired an old pointer of great experience, a prodigious favourite, and steady in the field as a rook, to accompany his friend Daniel Terry, then on a visit to Abbotsford, and who concluded to go on a sporting excursion. The dog wagged his tail in token of pleased obedience, shook out his ears, led the way with a confident air, and began ranging about with most scientific precision. Suddenly he pointed, and up sprung a numerous covey. Terry, bent on slaughter, fired both barrels at once, aiming in the centre of the covey, and missed. The dog turned round in utter astonishment, wondering who could be behind him, and looked Terry full in the face, but after a pause, shook himself again and went to work as before. A second steady point and a second fusillade followed, but with no effect. The dog then wheeled about and trotted home at his leisure, leaving the would-be sportsman to find for himself the rest of the day. Sir Walter was fond of repeating the anecdote, and always declared that it was true, while Terry never said more in contradiction than that "it was a good story."

FOR THE OLD LOVE'S SAKE.

Be kind in your greeting, beloved;
Don't think of the pain that is past;
Let not the shade of our parting
Over our meeting be cast.

I know I have grieved you sadly,
And full confession I make;
Be kind to your recreant lover—
Be kind for the old love's sake.

We were young and proud, you remember,
And neither was all to blame;
You were cold as the frost of December,
And I—well I met you the same.
We parted in silence and anger;
I went with a dull heartache
That never has left me, my darling—
Be kind for the old love's sake.

And what was the cause of our quarrel
I hardly can tell you to-day.
Mayhap I was needlessly jealous,
And you were a trifle too gay;
Or—well, let that be as it may be—
It was all too trifling to break
The bond that had bound us so closely—
Be kind for the old love's sake.

And if I was wrong—Oh! forgive me;
Believe that my heart has been true,
In sorrow and pleasure still turning
For ever and only to you.
And pride that was strong at our parting
Is broken; and humbly I make
A plea for forgiveness, behold—
Be kind for the old love's sake.

Again take my heart's dearest treasure
The vows that were broken renew,
Let the faults of the past be forgiven,
In the future be steadfast and true.
Our lives are too fleeting for anger;
It is wise to admit a mistake;
Clasp hands, and forget they were sundered—
Be kind for the old love's sake.

A. K.

DOLLY'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER VII.—(continued).

PERFECT silence followed, until at Westbourne Park, while the ticket-collectors were going their round, Mrs. Dell once more raised the handkerchief over the sleeper's face. She still slept on; no change was visible on her calm features.

"I am very thankful," breathed Mrs. Dell, almost as though she had forgotten she had a listener. "Things will be easier if she does not wake until we are safe in our hotel."

The Duke suddenly interposed.

"Does she always sleep away her life like this?"

Mrs. Dell seemed surprised.

"Lucy does sleep a great deal, but just now she is under the influence of an opiate which our doctor administered before she left home. I should never have got her away without."

"Lucy," thoughtfully; "it is a pretty name!"

"Lucy Dell. Poor child! afflicted as she is, her name is of little consequence."

"Lucy Dell!"

The Duke of Portsea had a good memory, and he was unusually impressed by this little incident. He made no note of the name, he made no entry in his pocket-book descriptive of the afflicted girl's face, and yet he knew perfectly well that neither face nor name could be forgotten by him!

"Do you make any stay in town, Mrs. Dell?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Only till I know the doctor's verdict of my child. It maybe I shall have to go home alone. All my friends warn me it would be better for Lucy to be in an asylum."

The Duke of Portsea shuddered.

"She is too young and fragile for that."

Madam, take an old man's advice, and keep your child with you. No care and medical skill surpass a mother's love."

She sighed.

"I wish I were free to follow your advice."

"And are you not?"

"I told you I am a widow."

"Which surely leaves you freer."

"No. There are relations on the father's side who would interpose if they deemed I was acting injudiciously—keen-sighted men of business, who would not understand a mother's love."

"What doctor are you going to?"

"I hardly know."

"Cleave Foster is a first-rate man for anything mental."

She shook her head.

"The choice will not rest with me."

"With whom, then?"

"Her guardians."

"And where shall you stay?" He was wondering a little whether she was as wealthy as everything about her seemed to indicate.

"At the Langham. I have telegraphed for a suite of rooms. My maid has gone on already to prepare for us."

Then the Duke of Portsea made an offer, which, coming from one of his rank and dignity, may fairly be called a very generous one.

"I fear you will have a sad and lonely time, even though this is one of London's gayest months. Will you allow my wife to call upon you? I am quite sure the Duchess of Portsea would do her best to be a help and a consolation to you."

Mrs. Dell clasped her hands, as though in the most fervent gratitude.

"I should be too thankful, your Grace," she said, energetically. "If you knew how I have dreaded this journey, how I shrink from its object, you would understand what it will be to me in the vast wilderness of London to see a woman's friendly face!"

"I am sure my wife will be a comfort to you. The Duchess has a knack of winning people's hearts. We have no daughters of our own, but she always takes an interest in all young girls, and I am sure she will have a special pleasure in ministering to one so lovely and so afflicted as your Lucy. To-morrow you will doubtless be engaged, but the day after I shall do myself the pleasure of bringing my wife to see you."

Mrs. Dell was so delighted that the tears stood in her eyes.

"I can't thank you enough, your Grace, but a widow's prayers will surely follow you, and the God of the fatherless will reward you for your kindness and compassion."

"Tut, tut!" said the Duke, pleasantly; "it's a mere trifle, Mrs. Dell, and a real pleasure to ourselves, I assure you."

The train was steaming slowly into the terminus now, and still that motionless figure in the corner had given no signs of life.

The Duke begged Mrs. Dell to command his services, and she did so to the extent of begging him to hail her a porter; further, she declared, she could manage very well.

But his Grace was a very considerate man, specially so where women were concerned. He would not leave her until he had seen a comfortable cab brought, with the luggage on the top; then he assisted the porter to carry that helpless burden and lay it on the seat beside Mrs. Dell; this done, he raised his hat with every token of respect, and said,—

"Good-night, madam. I look forward to the pleasure of our next meeting."

He gave the word of command to the driver and watched the cab out of sight with its load before he even thought of the luxurious brougham most likely be waiting for himself.

"Why, I might have placed this at Mrs. Dell's disposal," he muttered, regretfully, as he took his seat in his own carriage, and his footman waited on him with assiduous care. "What an idiot I was! It actually never struck me, till I saw James, that Muriel would have sent."

He called her Muriel still, in his thoughts, though to the outer world she was her Grace the Duchess of Portsea.

It was late when he reached Bruton-street, but a *recherché* repast awaited him, and the wife who for thirty years had made the sunshine of his life was there to welcome him.

She watched his face anxiously, and became alarmed at its grave, half-sad expression.

"Dear" (you see their new honours were so recent she had not learnt yet to call him Duke) "what is the matter?"

"The matter? Nothing, Muriel."

"You seem so grave."

"I met with a very sad case in the train. I think it made me serious. I fell to wondering why our lot was so perfect. Except Bertie's accession to matrimony I don't believe we have ever had a real trouble."

His wife bent and kissed him as he sat theirs was a very true and real union. While she had her husband and son nothing else mattered very much to the Duchess of Portsea.

"I suppose you haven't persuaded Bertie to change his mind, and accompany us to the Abbey?"

She shook her head.

"I have done my best, but he says he must go to Northshire to-morrow or Friday?"

"I wonder what the attraction is."

"We shall know some day," thinking of her boy's half confidence. "Now, I am waiting to hear your story."

"I don't understand. What story?"

"About the sad case you met in the train."

"Ah! Muriel, I have promised you will go and see them. I am sure you might be a comfort to the poor mother, and there is nothing repulsive or terrifying about the girl; she looks just like a beautiful, unconscious child."

"I will go, certainly," said the Duchess, when she had listened to all he could tell her. "I am very glad you thought of my doing so."

Two days later she ordered the carriage to the Langham Hotel, directing the footman to inquire for Mrs. Dell. The servant returned promptly; no such lady was staying there, nor was anyone of that name expected.

The Duchess was so hard to convince that an employé of the hotel came to the carriage. To him she explained briefly that the Duke had actually seen Mrs. Dell into a cab, and given the driver orders to take her to the Langham Hotel.

"It was on Wednesday evening soon after nine at the Paddington Station."

The waiter consulted the books of the Hotel, he made every possible inquiry, but he could only return to her Grace with the same answer,—

"Mrs. Dell was not at the Langham, nor was she expected there!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIDAY is generally deemed an unlucky day. There are many of us who would scorn to be called superstitious who yet shrink from commencing any new undertaking on that day of the week.

But Herbert Lord Asherton was quite free from such prejudices. He naturally wished to rejoin his *fiancée* at the earliest possible date, and Friday being the first day by which he could leave London he accordingly fixed on Friday.

He called in Bruton-street the night before his departure, and both the Duke and Duchess were struck with the brightness of his face. Never since his boyhood had they seen him so joyous and free from care. He discussed Portsea Abbey with them, showing an interest in the old place which delighted them; and when his mother reproached him for not accompanying them he laughed, and said she would tell him to stay away if she knew his temptation.

"But you will come soon?" pleaded her Grace, who, mother like, could not enjoy any home, however splendid, without her boy.

"In the autumn," returned Herbert, with a smile. "When I have transacted the business I have in hand we shall be very pleased to come to Portsea if you invite us."

"We!" repeated the Duke, incredulously. "Has it come to that, Herbert?"

"Yes," returned his son, with a gleam of happiness in his dark eyes. "You can't either of you reproach me, for you know you have advised me to marry more than twenty times."

But both his parents made a strange mistake. They guessed the "business" alluded to meant a proposal. They little imagined that was over; and when Herbert spoke of "us" he meant by Christmas he should have a wife, not merely a *fiancee*.

"Who is she, Bertie?" asked his mother. "Have we ever seen her?"

"Remember, my boy, you are the last of our name," said the Duke, gravely; "make a prudent choice."

Herbert smiled. "Pray did you think of prudence when you were young?"

Then his tone changed.

"I have followed your example, father, and fallen in love. My little girl is fair enough for a princess, but I don't think I ever troubled about that. All I required was that, like yours, my marriage should be one of mutual love."

A dozen questions poured down upon him, but Herbert would not answer them. She was an orphan of gentle birth, penniless and beautiful; that was all the description he vouchsafed of his bride, and the Duke and Duchess had to be content.

"So that he is happy," thought the mother, "what matters rank and fortune!"

"Herbert is as proud as I am," thought the father; "I need not fear for him. He could not love a woman unfit to bear his name."

And before going to Bruton-street Lord Asherton slipped a tiny note of three lines into the nearest pillar-box.

"SWEETHEART.—To-morrow at eight o'clock, at our old trysting place. Twelve hours after you receive this—we shall be together, free to plan out our future.—Yours till death,

"HERBERT."

Not by his title would he sign that letter—he really did not know if Dolly had even heard of his new honours—but signed himself to her by his simple baptismal name, Herbert.

Fortune did not favour the lover—that part of fortune, at any rate, of which the elements are symbolical—for more wretched day has seldom dawned than that appointed for Lord Asherton's journey.

Fortunately, save for the budding trees, it was more like November than May. The sky was one leaden grey, unrelieved even by a streak of blue; the rain fell in torrents, no mere summer showers, but a steady, drenching downpour. The east wind blew chill and cold—in fact, it was a day when one felt unconsciously depressed without knowing why; and you wanted a very strong sense of inward happiness to help you to bear cheerfully the desolate aspect of the outer world.

Lord Asherton had the inward happiness right enough, but still the state of the elements filled him with dismay.

He had parted from Lord Devereux on such terms that it was impossible he could enter Field Royal as his guest. He could not throw himself upon the compassion of the Countess, and expect her to sympathise with his love affairs, because he was perfectly aware Lady Desmond desired him for a son-in-law. No. Clearly his courtship must persevere be carried on in the open air; and fondly as he looked forward to meeting his Dolly he could not wish her to expose herself to the fury of such a storm. Certainly fate was against him!

But things seemed a little better when he was actually in Northshire. He put up at the Devereux Arms, and by the time he had dined and smoked a cigar the weather seemed to have improved. It was still far from propitious—damp and muddy under

foot, the wind as cold and high as ever, but the actual rain had ceased. Warmly wrapped up Dolly might venture down to the river bank without any great danger to her health.

He was there before eight had begun to chime, there at the spot where he had first told her of his love, there where he had first claimed her for his own, and struggled with his better angel, which whispered it was sin to speak of love to another woman while poor erring Magdalen was yet alive. Well, now he was here again, free to claim his darling before the world, free to give her not only love, but honour, name, and rank—and she was not there!

He waited over an hour. He started at every sound, fancying he heard her footsteps, only to be disappointed.

"She is afraid of the weather," he decided, sadly. "Of course I was foolish to expect her to-night."

And yet he remembered the bleak spring evening, when he had found her trembling with sorrow on that very spot, Dolly had seemed to him not over anxious about her own health. Yes, it was passing strange.

"Could the family at Field Royal have discovered her secret, and have prevented her leaving the house, not forcibly perhaps, but by assigning her some duty at that particular time? But this suggestion would not do—he knew the arrangements of the house so well. Mabel invariably retired early—from the moment she was handed over to her nurse Dolly was her own mistress.

"It must be the weather," thought Lord Asherton, for about the fiftieth time. "Of course she's quite right to be careful, poor darling."

And yet this thought brought him no comfort. He repeated the words over and over again, almost like a parrot rehearsing a lesson, but they did not convince him in the least. The moment he had uttered them he was asking himself as anxiously as ever why Dolly had failed him?

Back to the inn with a troubled face. Herbert had a knack of winning golden opinions from the lower classes. His hostess, a buxom matron, was already devoted to him, and as she waited on him was delighted to gossip a little harmlessly, and to tell him with honest pride how her daughter was once maid to one of the Ladies Devereux.

Herbert listened with more interest than such a simple matter should have had for him, and hearing Mrs. Bean was sending a letter to her daughter the next day he determined to send one to Dolly enclosed in it. How he arranged matters with the hostess, how he arranged to interest her most thoroughly I don't know, but before he went to bed the letter was written and entrusted to her; besides which Mrs. Bean had arranged, if matters went very badly with the lovers, to receive Miss Smith at a moment's notice, and protect the young lady in all honour and courtesy during the three days which, in spite of the license in Herbert's pocket, might have to elapse before she could be transformed into Viscountess Asherton.

"This house is called the Devereux Arms, my lord," she admitted, "but we've little cause to like the family. The last Earl was a good friend to us, and for her sake we were glad to send our girl to the Castle; but the present Lord Desmond has been a hard landlord to us, and as to the Countess she's a perfect skinflint. My Melia says she do believe Lady Desmond grudges every penny she spends."

"Do you know Miss Smith?" asked Herbert, with a strange yearning to hear her spoken of.

"Surely, sir; my Melia, which is nurse or maid to Lady Mabel, has pointed out the young lady to me. A sweet pretty face she has, but yet I was sorry enough to see her at Field Royal."

"Why, Mrs. Bean?"

"She favours the late Countess, my lord her who was drowned in the river."

"I have noticed the resemblance myself."

"Aye, the moment I saw Miss Smith I thought it was the Countess Viola herself; then I pitied the poor young lady, for I guessed she'd have nice time of it when the mistress came home."

"Why should she? Lady Desmond could not think it a crime for Miss Smith to resemble her sister-in-law."

"Ah! my lord, you don't know the ins-and-outs. Many's the time I've thought over them since I saw that pretty creature. But, there, she'll be Lady Asherton, and it's easy to see you'll take good care of her, my lord."

It was growing late; he had had a long journey and a cruel disappointment at its end. He felt tired; and so, instead of asking Mrs. Bean for the story she was dying to relate, he took the large old-fashioned chamber candlestick in his hand and went upstairs to bed.

But he could not sleep. Possessed of a good digestion, perfect health, and an easy conscience, Herbert's nights were usually of the most peaceful, conceivable description, but certainly this one was an exception. The crime could not be laid to the charge of the Devereux Arms. His large, old-fashioned chamber was clean and neat as a new pin; chintz curtains were closely drawn before the lattice windows, the four-post bed had hangings of spotless dimity and fragrant lavender-scented sheets—just the sort of couch to induce repose; but no. Had he been the most superstitious of mortals or the most suffering of invalids the Viscount could not have fared worse. He tossed uneasily on his pillows, haunted by the most fearful forebodings.

"This will never do," decided Herbert, with a sudden determination to conquer his wakefulness just by force of his strong will. "I shall look like a miserable scarecrow, and have my darling repenting her bargain when she sees me to-morrow—to-day, rather, for I'm sure I heard it strike two just now. I'll shut my eyes and go to sleep, whatever happens."

"Ah! reckless boast—Lord Asherton has to pay dearly for it. In less than ten minutes he was asleep, but the scene that followed was so awful in its terrible significance, he heartily repented slumber having closed his eyes.

He thought he stood by the banks of the silvery Way, just at the spot where he and Dolly first met, and where he had waited for her so vainly to-night. He stood there alone, his eyes bent upon the water with a nameless sensation of trouble on his heart, when suddenly he felt a hand upon his shoulder—a hand that could be felt, whose touch, gentle as it was, thrilled him through and through. He started and looked up, not knowing, not understanding in the least what he expected to see.

There stood beside him a woman, nay, a girl of singular beauty. For one moment he believed it was his darling, only grown graver, with a touch of sadness on her face he had never seen there before; then the strange vision shook her head mournfully, as though to tell him he was wrong, and he became aware that the apparition was not his Dolly, but a beautiful resemblance of her—a picture of her as she might be if time and sorrow laid their mark upon her, for, young as was the beautiful face raised to his, it lacked the hopefulness of extreme youth, the almost childish unconsciousness which was Dolly's greatest charm.

One time he essayed to speak, but the words would not come; he could only stand there motionless.

The vision seemed to understand. She stretched towards him her hand—the left hand, and on its third finger he saw a broad band of fine rich gold; then as she met his glance at it for the first time she spoke.

"Save my child!"

Herbert trembled. What did it mean? Was he the victim of a dream, or could there really be such things as supernatural visitants? If so, his darling must surely be in dire peril if her mother was permitted to wander back

from the shadowy spirit-world to warn him of her danger.

"Save my child!"

"I will."

Oh! how hoarse and unnatural his voice sounded even to himself.

The woman touched her ring.

"This which brought my misery shall bring her happiness," she said, in a kind of sad, far-off musical voice. "I have seen it all. There is nothing but sorrow for my darling until a ring like this is on her finger."

"It is my dearest wish to place such a ring there. I love her as my life."

A smile crossed the sad, sweet face.

"You love her, but you have lost her."

"No."

She bowed her head.

"Lost, poor wanderer, lost. In perils dire, in sorrows oft; but you will save her."

"Only show me how."

"I may not."

It seemed to Herbert he fell on his knees and implored her to have pity, and to give him a clue to her meaning. For some time she only shook her head; at last she said slowly,

"Distrust all you hear, dread those who seem her best friends, forget all they tell you, remember but this thing—she loved you."

With one wave of her hand the woman sped from him, and the scene changed. It was a large handsome apartment of an old London house, and a dozen women of all ages were scattered about it. Some were beautiful. All were nicely dressed, yet though Herbert understood nothing of what they were doing there he felt reluctantly they were not happy. He seemed to wander round the room until at last he saw a girl nursing a cat—a girl with a sad, hopeless face, whose violet eyes seemed to have shed tears until they were dull and sunken.

"Dolly!" he exclaimed, rapturously, "Dolly."

He would fain have clasped her to his heart, fain have borne her in his arms far from all those strange scenes, but between him and her was a barrier impossible to pass. It was perfectly transparent. Only when he essayed to get to Dolly did he become aware of its existence. It was not glass or crystal; indeed it resembled more a kind of atmospheric wall, Dolly was one side, he the other; neither could cross, and as this came home to him with bitter truth he heard a hideous laugh, and turning round saw Lady Devereux watching him with a face full of malignant triumph.

"This is awful!"

Such were Herbert's first words on awaking. He stretched himself, sat up in bed with a sigh of unutterable relief, as he recalled the awful incidents of his dream. He had certainly been awake at two. It was now half after six. In those four hours what a martyrdom he had undergone! What horrors even now seemed torturing his imagination!

From many dreams one wakes, it is true, with a recollection of disagreeables, but this passes off as time goes on; but to Herbert each quarter-of-an-hour chimed by the old wooden clock in the hall only made his remembrances more vivid and startling. He was not a superstitious man; but though laughing at the idea of ghosts and such like instances, he did feel as if there were something serious in his dream; something indeed, so serious that he resolved when once he held his darling in his arms she should not return even for half-an-hour to Field Royal.

His original plan had to be slightly modified to accomplish this. He had written to Dolly, begging her to meet him some time in the morning. He meant then to take her straight to the Devereux Arms and place her under the special protection of Mrs. Bean while he went on to the village, interviewed the clergyman, and made all arrangements for their wedding taking place the next day.

He would not return to the Devereux Arms, but would meet Dolly at the church, and take her to London the moment she was

his wife. No slur could thus rest upon her name, and she would be spared all disagreeables from the Desmond family. Mrs. Bean entered into the affair heart and soul. She told Herbert, when she brought in his breakfast, the gardener had taken the letter and package to 'Melia an hour before, and 'Melia being a most business-like young person, would give his note at once to its proper owner.

Herbert knew that Dolly had always claimed as her own the first hour after the schoolroom breakfast; doubtless she would avail herself of it to come to him. He pushed his toast and eggs away untasted, and set off for the trysting place.

Early as he was someone was waiting for him. Not Dolly—Oh, no, and how his heart sank as he discovered that—but a neatly-dressed handmaid, whom he clearly remembered to have seen sometimes in attendance on Lady Mabel, and who introduced herself to him as Mrs. Bean's 'Melia.

"And you have brought me a message?" he began, eagerly.

The girl's honest face clouded over.

"No, my lord. I have brought you back your letter," she said, simply.

"Brought me back my letter!"

"Mother wrote and told me"—here 'Melia blushed—she had a lover of her own, and was very full of sympathy for others in the same predicament—"that you would be here this morning waiting for Miss Smith, and so I made bold to come, my lord. I thought it 'ld be such dreary work for you to go on waiting hour after hour, and she not even know it, poor dear young lady."

With an awful fear at his heart Herbert laid one hand upon her arm.

"Where is she?"

"I don't know, my lord."

"You can't mean she has left the Castle?" went on Lord Asherton. "Girl, tell me everything. Indeed, indeed, it is kindest for me in the end that you should do so."

"I don't like to."

"Why?"

The girl shuddered.

"It 'll make you sorry."

"I can bear anything if I have her."

Poor 'Melia! she was very tender-hearted, and she shrank from the thought of inflicting pain.

"I wouldn't go for to believe it if I was you, my lord, for there's not one of us servants do. We all say Miss Smith was too good for that sort of thing."

"Tell me all," pleaded Herbert, driven almost wild by these half-confidences.

"My lady came home quite unexpectedly, my lord," began 'Melia, "as you may have heard."

He bowed his head.

"She never cared much for Lady Mabel you know, and so it wasn't strange; beyond just ten minutes or so in her own room, she never tried to see her, and so, until last Tuesday, neither she nor the Earl, had ever seen Miss Smith."

Herbert listened breathlessly.

"I used to wonder," went on 'Melia, "if she minded—Miss Smith, I mean; but I don't think she did. She was sad enough when she first came to the Castle, but she had grown quite bright and happy like. Tuesday morning, I remember in particular, she went about the house singing just like a bird."

It was the day on which she must have received Herbert's letter—the letter written just after hearing he was free, and so full of joyous hope. The coincidence struck on him even then.

"But she changed then," pursued 'Melia. "She saw the Countess that day, and the Earl, too, I think; and by evening she went about with such a wan, pale face I asked her if she had a headache, but she only smiled, and said she felt nervous, as though something dreadful were going to happen. I shall never forget her face as she said it, my lord. You see, it was the last time I ever saw her."

"The last time you saw her!" horror-struck; "but that is days ago."

"Yes, my lord. Wednesday morning a message came from the Countess. Lady Mabel was not to leave her room, and, of course, I had to stay there waiting on the little girl. It was not till I went down to the servants' hall to supper after Lady Mabel was asleep that I heard Miss Smith had gone."

"Gone?"

"She went to London by the five o'clock express, my lord. The carriage took her to the station. I mind the time well, because the Earl had been to London, and he came home late that night."

"But why did she go?"

Melia shook her head.

"Lady Desmond kept her room all day Wednesday, Thursday, and part of yesterday, and no one was allowed to go in to her but Lady Bertha. Last night at six o'clock a great bell was rung, and all the servants summoned to the dining-room. The Earl made a speech to us then that he had discovered Miss Smith in dishonest practices, and she had robbed him and the Countess of many valuable articles. She pretended to be summoned to London by telegram on account of a friend's illness, and had thus escaped. Lord Desmond forbade her name being mentioned at the Castle, and said it was only on account of her youth he did not set the police on her track."

"She never did it!"

"Never! Oh, my lord, so we all said, and Mrs. Bond, the housekeeper (she's never had a penny from her master; you see, my lord, having been left so well-to-do by the late Earl), she got up, and said quite bravely,—

"I packed Miss Smith's bag, my lord—at least I saw all that went into it, and I am ready to swear there was nothing belonging to you inside."

"The Earl he grew almost livid with rage; but the Countess she answered,—

"Doubtless, Miss Smith got rid of her ill-gotten gains before her flight."

"Then, what is missing, my lady?" asked Bond; but she couldn't get an answer.

"The Earl just dismissed us, and said it 'd be a warning to us, he hoped. We were all sitting out quiet enough, though some of us were brimming over with indignation; but Mrs. Bond she just went up to the Earl."

"My lord," she said, respectfully, "I've lived in your house for many years, but I shall leave to-morrow. Not being a paid servant I have no notice to give, but I'd like my lady or some one appointed by her to look over my things before I pack up, for I shouldn't care to be branded as a thief, though I'm as sure of my own innocence as I am of the sweet young lady whose name you've used so cruelly!"

Herbert uttered a low "Beast!" In spite of his awful anxiety about Dolly he could thoroughly enjoy the discomfiture of the Desmonds.

"Mrs. Bond was as good as her word," went on Melia. "I left her packing up; she's always been kind to me, and I just told her where I was coming. She means to spend a day or two with mother before she leaves Northshire, and she told me to beg you, if you had ever loved Miss Smith, to let her speak to you before you go back to London."

"And this is all you can tell me?"

"I'm afraid so, my lord. This letter, giving him the one he had written from London, "came yesterday morning, and I just put it into my pocket lest the Countess should see it. Mrs. Bond, maybe, could tell you more, my lord. You see, she was with Miss Smith to the moment of her going, and I never saw her after Tuesday night."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Herbert, after pressing upon Melia a very substantial contribution towards the furniture she and her "young man" needed ere they could set up housekeeping. "You have done me good service."

"I wish I could have done better for you,

my lord," said the girl, regretfully. "You see, I loved Miss Smith."

"She was good and true!" murmured poor Herbert, sadly. "How could they hate her so?"

"She had a kind word for every one," said Melia, simply, "and, for all she might be poor, any one could see she was just as much a lady as the Countess herself. If you should find her, my lord, I'd get you to give her my duty, and tell her I never believed one of the cruel things they said."

"If you should find her!" Strong man though he was, Lord Asherton trembled. Had it really come to "if?"

He had good-bye to Melia, and walked back to the Devereux Arms, his mind full of conflicting thoughts. One thing he never doubted—his darling's perfect innocence. He was spared the worst pang of all.

He loved Dolly as trustfully, his faith in her was as entire as though she had not disappointed him at the trysting-place last night. Appearances might be against her, but never a doubt of her would enter Herbert's head. She was still his ideal of all that was pure, and true, and womanly.

He still yearned for the right to shield her from all sorrow. What tortured him was no doubt of her worthiness, but the awful mystery which enshrouded her fate. How was he to find her?

It was so puzzling, so utterly bewildering! He knew she had not a relative in the world; he had never heard her mention even a friend. Admitting that she left Field Royal of her own free will, at whose bidding had she done so?

Mrs. Bean met him at the threshold of the Devereux Arms with a cloud of pity on her honest face.

"This is a heavy blow, my lord."

"You have heard, then?"

"The housekeeper's here, my lord; she's been talking to me this half-hour. Would you like to see her?"

"Aye."

Mrs. Bean brought Mrs. Bond into Lord Asherton's parlour, and lingered there herself. She felt a kind of share in the young nobleman's disappointment, and never thought her presence would be unwelcome. I doubt myself if Herbert even knew she was there. Mrs. Bond looked at him pityingly.

"Melia's told you, then, my lord?"

"Yes. But there is a mystery I cannot fathom. Of course the charge against her is a cruel lie; but why did she go—why leave the shelter of her home, the house where she knew I should come to claim her?"

Mrs. Bond started.

"Didn't you send for her, my lord?"

"Send for her? No!"

"She had a telegram on Wednesday. I took it up to her myself, thinking I'd comfort her if it was bad news. I never saw the message, my lord, but from what I heard, the broken words that fell from the poor girl, I gathered that you were ill—dying, even, it seemed, and your lady mother had sent for Miss Smith to Bruton-street to see you for the last time."

His face was colourless as marble. He listened in strained, agonised attention.

"How do you know this?"

Mrs. Bond melted.

"I always thought you loved her, my lord. I didn't see how you was to help it. As she sat with the telegram in her hand the words 'Herbert—dying—a last good-bye—oh, if I could die with him!—He must be dying, or his mother would not send for me!' All this made me think what I have told you. Besides, Miss Smith asked me where Bruton-street was."

Herbert looked like a man distraught with terror.

"I never was dangerously ill in my life. My mother never heard Miss Smith's name!"

"Then that telegram must have been a forgery?" said Mrs. Bond, shrewdly. "I mistrusted it."

"Why?"

"It came from the village, and a little boy brought it. Our telegrams—and the master has dozens—come from the town by a man on horseback."

The simple woman meant the small village post-office was not competent to send out a telegram; but for the issues at stake Herbert must have smiled.

"Unskilled labour might make a difference in a word or two; but this telegram seems to have been a lie from first to last."

"And a good thing, my lord—that you are not ill, of course, I mean."

He shook his head.

"Think what issues must be at stake before a man takes such a desperate step as forging a telegram; besides, Bond, that poor child left to go to my supposed death-bed last Wednesday. This is Saturday! Where is she now?"

The woman sobbed aloud. They had never thought of this view of the case.

"I shall go to the post-office," said Asherton, resolutely. "Perhaps they may be persuaded to tell me something about the telegram."

At first he was refused. The post-mistress declared it was against all the official regulations; but Asherton persisted—he promised never to mention the fact of her compliance.

"Law, ma," said a good-tempered girl behind the counter, "don't refuse the gentleman. He says it's a matter of life and death!"

"But the regulations, Matty!"

"Bother the regulations!" said Matty, determinedly. "Here, sir" (Asherton had concealed his name), "it happens I can help you. There were such a lot of names in the message I made a mistake in the first form I wrote it out on. If you just go to the desk the copy's on the floor. Supposing you pick it up by accident the officials can't blame us particularly."

Herbert picked it up "by accident." It was precisely the same as the message Dolly had received, only the spelling of the proper names was muddled, and bore the traces of connection.

"May I take this?"

"Certainly—only we don't give it you."

He promised to remember the distinction, and went back to the inn.

"You are quite right," he told Mrs. Bond. "She was lured away by my supposed illness."

"Do you think she ever reached Bruton-street?"

"I know she did not. I was with my parents on Thursday, and they would have told me."

Mrs. Bean shivered.

"I thought the moment I saw Miss Smith there'd be trouble in store for her the moment my lady the Countess came home."

"So did I," echoed Bond. "I kept them apart for days. I longed to warn Miss Smith, only somehow I couldn't."

"But warn her of what?" questioned Lord Asherton. "I don't understand."

Both women sighed.

"You don't know the ins-and-outs, my lord. Maybe, you've never heard the prophecy?"

Asherton asked what they meant. The "ins-and-outs" meant the doubt thrown on the Countess Viola's death by her husband's will.

"The present Lady has never had a happy day since," said Bond, firmly. "Never a stranger has come to Field Royal but she has trembled for her children's future. I believe she hated every boy or girl whose age fitted in with Lady Viola's loss. I knew the moment I saw Miss Dolly look at me with my poor lost mistress's violet eyes that there was trouble coming, and I believe—"

She stopped herself abruptly.

"Speak out," urged Herbert. "We are all friends."

"I believe she is our true lady, Lord Asherton. I believe the child Lord Desmond calle



[THE FATAL MESSAGE.]

a thief, whose name he forbids mentioned in his presence, is in very truth the rightful owner of Field Royal, and—and I believe he knows it!"

Lord Asherton shuddered.

If this was it what hope had he? If the Desmonds were at the bottom of Dolly's disappearance what hope had he of finding her? With so much to gain by hiding her was it likely they would relax their vigilance? If they had stooped to decoy her away by means of a forged telegram they would not stop at much.

And she was alone—his poor little lost love. She had no arm in all the world to lean on, no one to take her part and befriend her—she was powerless, helpless.

Suddenly there flashed on Herbert's mind the memory of his dream. He seemed to feel once more the touch of those slender fingers, to hear once more that voice from shadowland, "Save my child!" He began to understand his wakeful night; his disturbed slumbers might really have some bearing on Dolly's fate. From that moment he felt certain she was the child of his godfather, Herbert Earl Desmond.

"I will find her," he cried, speaking aloud, almost unconsciously, in his agitation, "if I have to search the world through. If I have to spend the best years of my life in the quest I will find her! I will never give up my pursuit until I hold my darling in my arms, or," his voice shook, "until I stand by the grave that covers her."

He cross-questioned Mrs. Bond pretty thoroughly, but she could tell him nothing he did not know. He could see she shared his own belief that they had not to seek Miss Smith, but Dorothea Countess of Desmond.

"If that's it," murmured Mrs. Bond, "you'll have a hard task, my lord. Lady Desmond that rules at Field Royal now is a hard woman, but she loves her children—the Viscount most of all. She'll leave no stone un-

turned; she'll spare no trouble—I had almost said no sin—to preserve Field Royal for him."

Herbert groaned. It was so true.

"Anyway," he said, gravely, "we have two facts to go upon. Miss Smith entered the five o'clock train last Wednesday; she was alone, had a ticket for London, and believed herself going to Bruton-street. It is how that journey ended we must ascertain first."

And to that end he went up to London that afternoon by the identical five o'clock train, and cross-examined guard and porter, who well-remembered the slight, black-robed figure who had been a passenger the Wednesday before.

"I'm not likely to forget her, sir. She had a sweet face, and she'd been crying bitterly. I remember thinking she was too young for such sorrow. I put her into the carriage with another lady, just those two together."

And the guard who took the train from Gloucester admitted seeing the carriage, and the two ladies in it. They had the compartment to themselves as far as Reading. There a number of passengers joined the train, and he lost sight of them. It would be better to inquire at Paddington.

Herbert followed the advice; he did inquire at Paddington. He backed his inquiries with a golden key, but he gained nothing to help him, even though skilled in reading character, he knew that his informants were telling him the truth, and doing their best to remember what he asked.

But porters, officials, cab-drivers, all were staunch on one point—no young lady alone had arrived at Paddington by that train. As a fact, very few ladies came up by it on Wednesday night, and most of them were elderly, or had their husbands with them. Only one girl seemed to have struck anyone, and she was an invalid, quite helpless, and had to be carried from the train to a cab.

Asherton shook his head, as though to say

she had nothing to do with her whom he sought.

"Well, that was the only young lady who came up by that train, and she had her ma and her pa with her. I saw every passenger who got out, and there wasn't a single other woman under thirty or, I might say, thirty-five."

Herbert drove off to his chambers almost besides himself, certain of but one thing—his beautiful, violet-eyed darling was lost to him somewhere in the great Babylon of modern London. His golden-haired love was wandering, perhaps in pain and sorrow, perhaps persecuted and despised; while he who loved her more than life could not raise a finger in her defence. In spite of all the trials which he had known, the hour when he realised this was the most bitter in Herbert's life.

(To be continued.)

QUICK AT REPARTEE.—The wit of the Japanese is keen and tempered, and they can often administer a perfect snub in brief, terse form. I remember an instance of this that struck me forcibly at the time, though I had by no means yet mastered the niceties of the language. I was loitering in Yeddo, waiting orders, and I stepped into a court or examination-room where a trial was going on. The case was one involving the possession and ownership of a certain piece of property about which two brothers had violently quarrelled. The holder, who was clearly not the rightful owner, had assaulted and ejected his brother, and was protesting his right to defend his claim. The examiners listened very patiently to him until he closed with the words, "Even a cur may bark at his own gate," when a judge quaintly voiced the universal judgment, as if stating an abstract point of law, "A dog that has no gate bites at his own risk." This was the only judgment rendered, but it was final.



["THIS IS, INDEED, A PLEASURE TO ME, MISS BUTLER!" HE CRIED, EARNESTLY.]

NOVELLETTE.]

A WOMAN'S REVENGE.

—:—

"ERNEST, do you intend to obey me in this matter?"

No reply from the young man, flicking with his walking-stick the dead leaves scattered in such profusion around him.

"Do you hear me, sir? Do you intend to obey me in this matter?"

Father and son were standing together at the further end of the avenue leading to Leigh Towers. The former regarded with knit brows and angry eyes the young man before him, apparently indifferently toying with the dead leaves at his feet.

But, in fact, Ernest Leigh was but giving himself time to conquer the angry feelings and harsh words that were so near the surface, for he remembered that the provoker of them was his father.

With a last mighty effort he raised his dark brown head, and, looking up straight into his father's face, replied, slowly and respectfully,—

"Do not ask me any further, father! In all other respects I will obey you; but in this—never!"

"Very well, young man. Perhaps you do not think sufficiently what the consequences of your refusal to accede to my wishes may be; therefore I will give you due time for reconsideration. For the present we will put the matter on one side; but, remember, if by tomorrow evening you can't give me a satisfactory reply then you may go to—well, anywhere you choose! You shall no longer be any son of mine! There, I have said it!"

"But, father," began the young man, quietly, though the words came forth from a frame tingling with suppressed excitement.

"Don't say another word, sir, unless you can promise what I require," broke forth the excited and angry father. Then he added, "But

I should like to hear your objection or objections to Miss Adeline Merton. I should consider her handsome enough to satisfy the tastes of the most fastidious."

"She is very handsome," Ernest Landon quietly replied.

"Oh, you really do acknowledge that one point in her favour?" sneered Sir Francis Landon.

His son bit his lip sharply beneath his drooping moustache; but this was the only visible sign of the angry feelings he was experiencing.

"And," continued the baronet, with scornful tones, "what are your objections to the lady whose beauty, evidently, is not in fault?"

"Father, I do not love Adeline Merton. Surely that is sufficient reason for my rejection of your wishes!"

"Do not *love* her!" sneered the father. "I suppose you do not absolutely *hate* her?"

Again the young man addressed had a hard struggle with his emotions; but he conquered still.

"I have no reason to hate Adeline Merton," he answered, in a low tone.

"I should think not, indeed, sir! And as for not loving her—why, of course, a man looks rather to the advantages to be derived from his marriage, and then love and all that sort of humbug naturally follow. Now, turn just to this point with me."

Ernest Landon silently followed, as his father, with rapid steps, walked sharply down the avenue to the entrance gates.

"Now," continued the Baronet, "look well around you. What woods—what rich land! And all this as far as eye can stretch—aye, further, too!—may be yours if you have the good luck to win Adeline Merton's hand and fortune; for, boy, remember that but a small portion of the scene before you is in my possession. Oh, Ernest, you can't be foolish enough to throw away such a chance! And the girl likes you, and is quite willing!"

Father, do not ask me further. I have

told you already that I could never marry Adeline Merton, and you know we Landons seldom retract."

"You are right there, sir, and speak the truth," exclaimed the now thoroughly-aroused Baronet. "I have vowed to myself that if my son will not consent to do as I wish him, then he is no longer a son of mine. Now you know the consequences of your stubbornness and obstinacy, and the sooner we part the better."

"Father, you can't mean what you say?" sorrowfully asked the young man.

"To quote your own words 'we Landons seldom retract!' You have my answer in your own words. You can draw on my bankers for five hundred pounds, and that is all you will ever get of my money. Now, out of my sight as soon as you can! I am due at Colonel Helston's to dinner to-night, when we will part here, and, remember, when you come to your senses you may send to me."

Sir Francis ended, and then, without bestowing another glance on the son whom he was thus sending forth from his home, he turned on his heels and departed to the house. And Ernest Landon?

When the last sound of his father's departing footsteps had died away, he also turned and slowly and thoughtfully bent his way towards the house.

Arrived there he repaired to his own private sitting-room, and throwing himself into his favourite chair, gave himself up to sad musings. What should he do? Where should he go?

He went over in his own mind all the facts of the case and the cause of his sudden and angry dismissal from his luxurious home; but as the face and figure of the woman respecting whom the quarrel had arisen occurred to him, a cold, hard look came into his eyes, and he shook his head in a determined manner.

"No, that I could never bring myself to do," he murmured. "I would rather go forth and earn my own living in the humblest way than

marry Adeline Merton, and thus secure all her wealth! And then—Come in!" he added, in a louder key, as a faint tapping made itself heard at his door.

The door opened slowly and quietly, and a woman entered, at sight of whom Ernest Landon rose, and with a cold and courtly bow offered his chair to his visitor.

"No, thanks, Ernest; I do not think I must sit down as I am afraid I may be hindering you; but, oh, Ernest! I have heard all, and I am so sorry!"

Ernest Landon started, while a crimson flush dyed his cheek; but no sound issued from his lips as he turned his face away, and stared steadily out of the window at the scene beyond. Fair fields that would later on reveal all the wealth they contained, now hidden beneath the dark brown sods. Wild and far-stretching woods that spoke of a wealth of timber. And all this he must turn away from and leave for ever, because he would and could not bring himself to take as wife the woman now standing but a few paces from him.

"Ernest," the latter whispered, as she came nearer to him, and laid a white and well-shapen hand upon his coat-sleeve. "Ernest, you do not think I tried to listen?"

"Of course not," he replied; but there was a ring of secret in the words, and the faintest up-lifting of the upper lip accompanied them. The woman at his side noted it all.

"No," she resumed, "I did not try to listen; but I was—"

"Do not trouble to excuse yourself, Adeline," broke forth the young man. "You heard all, you say, and therefore it is needless to inform you now that I am just contemplating packing up all my belongings for my departure this night, therefore I must ask you to excuse my making this interview a very short one."

He moved to the door as he spoke, and held it open wide as a sign for his visitor to depart; but Adeline Merton took no notice whatever of the hint conveyed. Looking forth from the window she clasped her hands and murmured softly,

"And all this might be his!"

"Adeline," called Ernest Landon from his position at the door, "do not let us enlarge upon the reason of my dismissal from Leigh Towers. Surely it must be a painful subject to both of us, considering—"

"Considering that I am come here purposely, Ernest, to plead with you for your father's sake—and for my own."

The last words in a lower and softer tone, while her beautiful brown eyes filled with tears, as she glanced timidly up at the man before her.

Softened somewhat by the sight of her grief, he left his post at the open door and drew nearer to her.

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest! say you will not leave us all—leave me!" came the pleading tones once again.

"Adeline, I can't promise it! I can only remain here at Leigh Towers upon one condition, and that one you have already heard me aver to my father is impossible. I am sorry for us both—sorry that we should have met. Adeline, you will meet many suitors in the society which is your proper sphere, and soon you will forget that you ever fancied you had given your heart to Ernest Landon."

"Never, Ernest! Do you think I should have stooped to come here and to plead with you had not love, strong and passionate, been my ruler and guide? No, Ernest. Other men may woo me, but none of them will ever win from me the smallest iota of that feeling we call love. And why? Oh, Ernest, Ernest! can't you make your father happy? I heard your words that you could never love Adeline Merton; but, supposing she is willing to put that condition aside, at—"

"Adeline, once and for all I tell you a marriage between us can never take place! So press the subject no further. I leave here to-night, and we two may never meet again; but let us part in friendship, Adeline. We have

been old playmates in days gone by, and I do not think we have quarrelled more than the ordinary run of children, so let us part friends. Come, Adeline, let us shake hands and wish me God speed and prosperity where'er I pitch my tent."

And Ernest Landon drew nearer his beautiful companion, and held forth his hand with a friendly smile. And Adeline Merton—drawing her small figure up to its full height she proudly threw up her queenly head, and with sparkling eyes and kindling cheek regarded the handsome face bending to her with its pleasant smile.

"Shake hands with you when you have treated me so!" she broke forth in low tones, which told too plainly the intensity of her feelings. "Never, Ernest Landon! You have listened to my professions of love to you—a love unasked for and unsought, which I could not help but betray, and then you coolly reject it, cast it on one side, and calmly talk to me, with a smile on your face, of a friendly parting—a friendly parting for the sake of old times. When the thought of these same old times is maddening to me, recalling, as it does, to me the happiest moments of my existence—the moments that one by one ripened the child's attachment into the woman's love!"

She ceased, and short, quick sobs followed, shaking her whole frame.

"Adeline, Adeline, calm yourself! It is useless thus exciting yourself."

"Useless! ah, that is the very word." Then, as though remembering herself, the girl once more drew herself up, and with a low inclination of her pretty head, continued, "But I am detaining you from packing, Ernest. Farewell! we may meet again" and with a cruel and bitter smile marred the beauty of her perfect face. Adeline Merton passed forth through the open door, leaving the man she so loved to his own thoughts and his preparations for his departure from his home.

"Poor Adeline!" soliloquised the latter, as he closed the door upon her, and seriously set himself to the task of collecting his belongings. "Poor girl! I am sorry for her, and yet I can do nothing for her. Even had I never seen the other, still a marriage with her would be impossible. What a fearful thing a misplaced affection is!" and set to packing.

* * * * *
"Poppy."
"Yes, aunt."

"You can carry this jelly to old Granny Higgins after tea. Would you like the walk child?"

"Very much, Aunt Susan. I shall so enjoy a stroll across the fields this lovely weather, and I can come back across the bridge through Mildmay Park, and then as I come through the cornfield I will get some poppies to brighten up the grate in the parlour."

"Lor, bless the child! How you are always thinking about the flowers."

"But I love them so, Aunt Susan, especially the dear, bright poppies, and you know they are my namesakes, so I suppose I ought to like them the best of all," replied the girl, as she laughed merrily, and put back with small, delicate-looking hands the sunny ringlets clustering around her fair face.

Mrs. Butler sighed lightly at the girl's words, and glanced tenderly at her, as one looks tenderly at anything precious that one fears suddenly may be torn from one.

But the girl heeded not the glance, but continued her needlework with smiling, flushed countenance. For she had her secret, and a very pleasant secret, too. One that is familiar enough to young maidens of sweet seventeen, especially when they are as fair and fresh-looking as Poppy Butler. The young girl's brain beneath the wealth of clustering golden hair was even then busy with a thousand dreams and fancies for the future—which future, she fondly hoped, was to be spent side by side and hand in hand with—But that was her secret.

The short silence that intervened between

the two—spent in such sweet dreaming by the younger one—was broken by the elder.

"Poppy, I hear Mr. Leigh has returned."

The girl started, and in her agitation ran the point of her needle far into the pretty, pink finger.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in a low tone of pain.

"What is the matter, Poppy?"

"I have pricked my finger, Aunt Susan."

"Oh, is that all? Why, I very often prick mine, and badly, too, but I should never think of crying out and startling one in that way."

"Did I startle you, Aunt Susan? I am very sorry, I am sure, but it really does pain me so," replied the girl, as she drew forth her handkerchief, and wound it round the poor injured member.

"Isn't it better now, child?" asked her aunt, presently.

"Yes, thank you, Aunt Susan. I must be more careful in future."

"Yes, but did you hear what I asked you?"

Mrs. Butler looked up sharply at the girl, then repeated,

"I hear Mr. Leigh has returned. Have you seen him? But, bless me! what makes your cheeks such a colour?"

"Are they very red?" Poppy asked, nervously, as she bent her head, as though she found her work most absorbing.

"Red!" repeated Mrs. Butler. "I should think so. Just like two scarlet poppies. I am sure you need not go far to gather any."

The girl laughed merrily.

"Oh, Aunt Susan, please do not! I should not like to lose my cheeks, and I am sure they can't be of such a beautiful colour as the real poppies in the cornfields. But here comes Ann with the tea things. I will put up my work, and help her to lay the cloth."

So saying the girl arose, put by her work carefully in a drawer, and then busied herself in arranging the tea table. And so Mrs. Butler's remark remained without answer.

Was it by accident, or was it intentional on the girl's part? Time will show.

An hour or two later and Poppy Butler was crossing the bridge leading from Mildmay Park. The jelly had safely reached its destination, and met with great approval from Granny Higgins.

Now, in place of the small basket, Poppy held in her hand a book and one or two star-like white flowers—the moon-daisies of the lover's language. Half-way across the wooden bridge she stopped, and, leaning over the low rail, plucked two of the first of her daisies from their stalks, and, with trembling fingers, dropped them down into the clear water below.

"One for me, one for—" Here she hesitated, and glanced shyly and fearful lest the very leaves and water might hear her secret. But, no one being in sight, she murmured, ever so softly, —

"And one for Ernest!"

Then, flushing rosy-red as the dear syllables left her lips, she watched with bright eyes and earnest gaze the course of the floating white stars. The rippling waters carried the flowers steadily on their surface—steadily, but slowly.

"How far apart they are!" murmured the girl, as she noted the distance between the white blossoms. "Shall we be like them, and never be anything more to each other than strangers?"

But no! Happy and joyful sign! the starry types of the lovers' course gradually drew nearer each other. Then the outstretched petals closed, whereupon the watcher of their course clasped her pretty hands, while her cheeks grew a brighter crimson as, with sparkling violet eyes, she still watched. Down the stream onward float the two white blossoms, now close together with snowy petals entwined. But, alas, only for a short season!

Presently a large ripple, caused by the sudden plunging of a water-rat into the clear water, lifts them high up for a second. The next, and they are once again floating peacefully down the stream; but each goes on its way far removed from the other. Genuine tears start to the girl's eyes as she notes all, while she murmurs forth,—

"Ah, can it be true that we shall but meet to part? But it may not be for ever. I will watch still."

Throwing away the rest of the flowers, she continued her way; but when a firm tread was made audible on the wooden planks, she became aware that she was no longer alone.

Then, drawing herself up and turning hastily, she confronted the very man whose fate, mingled with her own, she had been so anxiously testing for the last ten minutes! Yes, there he stood, not three paces from her, with extended hands, a pleased expression on his handsome face and in his clear grey eyes. He was the first to speak.

"This is, indeed, a pleasure to me, Miss Butler! I only returned last evening, and already I have the opportunity to renew our pleasant acquaintance."

"I heard that you—at least, Aunt Susan was saying at tea-time that she had heard you had returned, Mr. Leigh," replied the girl, as she stooped to take her flowers from the ledge whereon they had been resting. At the same time she gave a wistful glance down the stream where floated the fair white petals. Her companion noted the glance.

"There are no forget-me-nots on these banks, Miss Butler. I searched well last evening for some, but was unsuccessful. I wanted a few blossoms very particularly to send to a lady friend of mine."

The girl glanced up quickly; then, as if afraid she had betrayed herself, she turned slightly away, and remarked,—

"Your friend will be disappointed, Mr. Leigh. Why not send her some daisies instead. There are plenty of them growing in the meadows, and they are very pretty."

As she spoke she bent her head lovingly and caressingly over the pure white petals, which she had picked up again while they were speaking. Her companion smiled as he listened to her words, but the smile was accompanied by a wistful, tender, eager light from his grey eyes. Both smile and look, however, were unperceived by Poppy Butler.

"Ah, what a good idea, Miss Butler!" he exclaimed. "I believe my friend likes all flowers, so that it will be immaterial to her whether they are simple daisies or blue-eyed forget-me-nots. You say they grow in the meadows—the daisies I mean. Now, I am in a great hurry, and might not have time to gather them myself; but I suppose I am taking too great a liberty in asking such a favour—and perhaps you want these for yourself?"

Again the smile, again the wistful, eager look in Ernest Landon's eyes as he lowered his head towards the fair, golden one before him.

"I have gathered these for my aunt's room," Poppy replied a little sharply, then turned away with one more wistful glance down the river, and prepared to continue her way.

Tears were not far off. The deep violet eyes and the golden head drooped slightly as the girl eyed her flowers and walked slowly on, wondering whether he would ever forgive her for her rudeness in thus leaving him without the faintest farewell. But she was not long left to wonderment. With hasty steps Ernest Leigh followed, and soon overtook the slight figure.

"Miss Butler, I hope I have not offended you?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Leigh; only I am in a hurry. Good evening."

"Good evening, Miss Butler."

Then he turned and left her.

"He will never care for me more after this,"

the girl told herself, as she wended her way through the cornfields. "The daisies told the truth, after all, and now all is over, and I wish—I wish—"

And then the tears rolled quickly down the pretty face as Poppy Butler sank down amid the golden corn and scarlet poppies, and gave herself up to the indulgence of a good fit of weeping. And none passed by or heeded her, save a little field-mouse which had its nest near by, and which, coming across the big "white" thing in its path, surveyed it with its bright little eyes for a few seconds, and then quickly took refuge up a well-laden corn-stalk.

The sun's rays became more and more oblique. A breeze sprang up out of the west, and swayed the golden ears and ruddy poppies to and fro, and then Poppy Butler rose from the place where she had thrown herself down half-an-hour previously, and, taking off her hat, adjusted her sunny hair and smoothed down her crumpled skirts.

"Now for the poppies!" she exclaimed, and began plucking a goodly handful as they swayed to and fro in the evening breeze; and then, with red and white blossoms in both hands, she returned slowly and thoughtfully towards Brookdean Farm.

"Adeline."

"Yes, Sirey."

It was the name she had given the baronet when first she came to Leigh Towers, when a wee child of four years only, with pretty, lisping tongue, and the name had always been retained by her—at Sir Francis's wish.

Months had passed since that stormy scene between father and son, and since the interview between Adeline Merton and Ernest Landon, when he had rejected the passionate love she had offered him—unmasked.

Months had passed, and many changes had taken place at Leigh Towers. But the greatest and most noticeable had to do with the baronet himself.

Since that day when he had stood in the leafless avenue and pointed out to his son the life that he so fondly hoped would be that son's by his marriage with their fair owner, Sir Francis had strangely altered.

From a strong, upright man, he had become bent and aged-looking, taking no interest in field-sports, or, in fact, any outdoor exercise. Caring only to sit and while away the hours in the grand old library amid the brown-covered volumes, gathered there by his grandfathers.

And Adeline Merton was his constant companion, and devoted herself to the fulfilling his every whim and wish.

Strange it seemed that one so highly gifted and so keenly alive to the appreciation of the pleasures and charms of society, should thus voluntarily neglect, for the time, all the bright accessories of wealth, youth, and beauty, and thus spend hour after hour in the quiet and monotonous companionship of a man for whom the gay scenes of this world were as a thing of the past.

But, strange as it might be, Adeline Merton was a constant and devoted attendant upon the failing baronet.

But to return. The two were sitting in the twilight in the old library. Sir Francis was in his favourite spacious leather chair in the recess of the bay window; while, a little removed, lounged Adeline Merton in a low rocking-chair.

"Adeline, I have wanted to ask you for some time past if you have ever heard from him?"

A flush rose to Adeline Merton's face, while her fingers turned rapidly the leaves of the book from which she had just been reading.

"Never, Sirey," she replied.

"Ah!"

The exclamation was fraught with sadness.

"Why should he write, Sirey?"

"I thought perhaps he might have recon-

sidered his decision, Adeline. That is all," wearily replied the Baronet.

A longing was in the tone—a longing which was reflected in the girl's face as she listened.

"I do not think he will ever alter his determination, Sirey. But I can't think the reason—unless—"

"Unless what?" sharply questioned Sir Francia.

"Unless he has met some one else whom he loves, Sirey."

"Ah! I had thought the same, Adeline. But, oh, child! it seems hard that mother and daughter should both suffer—both suffer from a misplaced affection!"

"Tell me more, Sirey."

The girl spoke calmly and quietly, as she drew still nearer and seated herself at the baronet's feet.

"Adeline, it is a sad, sad tale; but better tell it you now, or it may be too late. Adeline, have you never wondered why I have always shown you such great affection, and why I had driven from my home my only child?"

"I thought—but no, Sirey! you couldn't treat him so, simply for that," replied the girl.

"Simply for what, Adeline?"

"Because he failed to wed me when you so wished it, Sirey," came the low-spoken response.

"You are right in your conjectures, Adeline. But do you know the reason why I so earnestly desired a marriage between you two? Listen, and I will tell you. I was but five-and-twenty when I married; married, at my parents' wishes, a woman whom I had met but little; but then she was wealthy, and the heiress of all this."

Here the baronet stretched his thin, white hand out towards the distant scene of woods and rich lands.

"So we were married and returned home after the usual honeymoon. My wife and I went much into society; and it was at a ball given by a county magnate, in honour of my bride, that I learnt what a mistake my marriage was. A life-long mistake! Adeline, listen! Your mother and I met but seldom after that night, but the mischief had been wrought, all too surely. We loved each other! My child, there was no sin in it! I spoke no words to her that my own wife might not have heard, and she was silent too. Five years later I heard of her marriage with an old man rich as Croesus, but I know there was no love in the match. Then I heard no more of her—my only love—till another five years, when you arrived at Leigh Towers, bringing with you a letter containing her latest words. Her husband had died when you were but a few months old; when she felt her end approaching she named me your guardian and her executor, and begged me to take care of you for old acquaintance sake. Still, no words of love were written; but I know well that she thought more of me in her dying hours. Now you know, child, why I have quarrelled with and driven from his home my only child! Adeline! I loved him; but I love more the child of the only woman who was ever dear to me! Tears, child, will do no good! I have ever done my best for you, and it is hard that your happiness should thus be ruined as your poor mother's."

"Oh, Sirey!" exclaimed the girl. "I care not if you will still remain with me and love me!"

"Adeline, that cannot be; I am failing fast. Yes, child, it is the truth! But before I go I must see Jackson and alter my will."

"Sirey, may I ask you one question?"

"What is it, Adeline?"

"Will he inherit all this?"

A hurried movement of the small hand towards the distant landscape.

"Inherit it! he! never!" replied the baronet, bringing down his hand with a heavy thud upon the leather elbow of his chair.

"Poor Ernest!" almost whispered the girl. So low—so unconscious of her companion—she was startled when she found that her words had been overheard.

"Adeline, do not show me or tell me that you pity him. You! why it is on account of you that he has left all. Oh, Adeline, Adeline!"

The girl's beautiful brown eyes sparkled brightly as she glanced up into the face of her companion.

"Sirey," she said, gently but firmly, "I forgot myself for the moment. Do not be alarmed, I do not *really* pity him."

"Ah! that is right."

"No, I do not really pity him," continued the girl, while the fire in her dark eyes was brighter than before; "and some day, perhaps, he will be sorry that he has thus slighted and spurned me!"

The young head was raised, while the full, red lips closed firmly, as though their owner were quite determined.

"Adeline, get pen and paper and write to Jackson at once. I do not feel quite as well as usual, and he must not come *too* late. I shouldn't rest *easy* in my grave if I thought *he* were in possession here."

Adeline Merton rose slowly, and crossing the room seated herself before a davenport, and hurriedly dashed off a few lines.

"I have finished, Sirey."

"That's right. Now ring and have it posted at once; *at once*, or it may be too late!"

The letter despatched Adeline returned to her low chair, but a faint sigh broke from her as she resumed it.

"He may return and promise obedience to his father's wishes before then," she thought.

The sigh was for him. It seemed so sad that he should be thus disinherited.

Ah well! She loved him so well—after a fashion!—so well that she had set aside all pride and sought that last interview with him when she had heard from his own lips that—

Well! she would forgive him if he came again in penitence.

And if not?

Or, if he were again but to speak of his love for another—then, she told herself, she would not brook it! No! such love as hers would then turn to bitter hatred; and revenge must follow, sure and swift!

Yes: let him beware!

Such thoughts as these passed swiftly through her brain with no one near her save her guardian. Some far off sound in the house roused her at last.

"Sirey must have fallen asleep, he is so still," she murmured to herself as she raised her head and glanced up.

One look. Then she flew to the nearest bell and rung it hard and fast. Sir Francis, the owner of Leigh Towers, was lying back in his chair, unconscious and in a fit.

"Miss Butler, once again I am fortunate!"

"Mr. Leigh!"

"You are not surprised to see me?"

"Not very."

"I hope not. I know I ought not to have taken the liberty to send those few lines; but you will pardon my boldness, Miss Butler?"

"Certainly, Mr. Leigh."

Almost coldly spoken, but Ernest Leigh did not feel at all disheartened at the curt reply.

He was learning his lesson—was almost perfect in it; and did not mis-read the signs that spoke of the inward agitation, experienced by the girl at his side.

The scene was the same as where he had once asked her for her flowers to send his friend; and she had been so pierced, so mortified; and yet she could scarcely tell why she had been so vexed, for no word of love had passed Ernest Leigh's lips, and she had no right to imagine, for an instant, that she was anything to him, save a mere acquaintance, whose tastes and feelings were in common with his, and therefore appreciated; but on the previous evening she had received a few brief words from Ernest Leigh—a few words brought her by one of her aunt's carter-boys, who had grinned from ear to ear, as he gave the same to "Miss Poppy," and told her how

that the gentleman who was staying at the inn had given it him, as he was coming across the "Home Meadow."

And Poppy Butler had received the same with hot, burning blushes flooding her fair face, and had opened the little, twisted note with hasty and trembling fingers, as soon as she had dismissed the messenger.

Only a few words asking her to be at the bridge on the following evening; and then the signature in a bold and manly hand. And without considering the step at all in its light of right or wrong, Poppy Butler had pressed the senseless paper to her lips, and had vowed that she would be there. And now she was standing on the planks of the narrow bridge, standing with knots of poppies and daisies at her throat, and with downcast face and changing colour, waiting for—

And meanwhile she gave short and almost cold replies to the man at whose bidding she had come forth to meet him at the appointed tryst.

And Ernest Leigh?

It was not for a mere half-an-hour's pleasant chat with his fair companion that he had begged her thus to meet him.

"Miss Butler—Poppy!"

The girl started as the name fell from the stranger's lips, while a whole flood of crimson dyed her face and neck.

Ernest Leigh drew nearer still and gently took within his the little gloved hand, lying loosely at her side.

No fear of being interrupted by a casual passer-by.

The place was pretty and picturesque enough to tempt many an owner; but, as Ernest Leigh well knew, when he neared the spot, but few cared to resort thither towards eventide.

For it was the scene of one of the traditions of the sweet village. Leading as it did to the neighbouring park here, on the river was supposed to be seen playing in the clear moonlight nights the ghost of a little child with fair hair stretching down her back—a little child of only a few short years. A lady visitor at Mildmay Park had, some years previously, brought her only little girl with her, and the child was accompanied by its nurse—a woman with shifting eyes and strange manner.

One evening, towards the middle of July, the two—the child and her nurse—were seen walking through the Park in the direction of the bridge, and from that night nothing had since been heard of nurse or child.

Various were the rumours afloat respecting their fate; but the commonest was that both had perished 'neath the waters; and, as I have before mentioned, many affirmed that the figure of the child was to be seen, on clear moonlight nights, playing round the river banks. A few of the wiser ones of the village shook their heads at this report, and spoke of the gipsy encampment that had been broken up the very night the child was lost. But to return.

Ernest Leigh, knowing all this, dreaded not any interruption from passers-by. But, taking the little hand in his, he drew closer to him the unresisting form, and bending his head to hers, murmured softly,

"Miss Butler—Poppy. I have asked you to meet me here this evening to tell you that I am going away."

"Going away, Mr. Leigh?"

"Yes, Poppy, going away."

"When?" in very faint tones.

"To-morrow morning—very early."

"I am very sorry," in still fainter tones.

"Really sorry, Poppy?"

"Yes," spoken so low that Ernest Leigh had great difficulty in catching the little affirmative. But the blushing face and drooping form told him all he wanted to know. "I am glad you are sorry, Poppy. Very glad. For now I know you will welcome me all the more when I return."

"Oh, Mr. Leigh, you will return?"

"Would you miss me very much if I did not, Poppy?"

"Yes."

A short sigh and a shiver as Poppy Butler realised what his last words really implied.

"Never return! And she loved him so!"

"Do not be afraid, my darling; I must call you so, for I love you so dearly, Poppy! I will return, and when I come again it will not be long before I hope to steal my darling from dear, quiet Bourton and transplanting Poppy to my own home. Will she be ready to come?—and willing?"

No reply, only a sweet, sweet smile irradiating the fair face.

"Answer me, darling, please. Let me hear from your lips that my love is returned."

"Mr. Leigh, I do love you," murmured the girl, glancing up with flushed face and dewy violet eyes, into the handsome face, so near—so very near her own!

"Not Mr. Leigh, darling!"

"Ernest, I do love you."

"Then it is all settled, Poppy. Now I will tell you why I must leave you; for a short time, at least."

A troubled look crossed the girl's face at his last words. He had noted it, and continued, while his grasp of the small hand grew firmer and closer,—

"My darling, do not grieve because I leave you for a short time. You will trust me still, will you not, Poppy?"

"I shall always trust you, Ernest."

"And I you, Poppy. A few weeks, and I shall again be with you, and then we will tell Aunt Susan all about it, and ask her consent."

And then fell one of those delicious silences, so delicious to the lovers who have just spoken the words to one another. A silence and a pause which such lovers do not find irksome, for—

"Ernest, why must you go away?"

"Ah! I was forgetting. To-day I received a letter from my father's solicitor—letter containing sad news, Poppy; indeed, terrible to me, for my father and I parted in anger."

Ernest Leigh paused a moment to recover himself, as he thought of the scene when last he and his father had met.

"Is he dead, Ernest dear?" almost whispered the girl, as a look of sadness crossed her bright face.

"Yes, darling, he is dead, and I go tomorrow to be present on the following day at his funeral."

A low, quick sob broke from Poppy Butler.

"Poppy, my darling, what is it?" anxiously inquired her lover, as he bent his lips and laid them on hers.

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest! my darling, I wish you would not leave me!" broke from the girl, as she leant her fair head against Ernest Leigh's encircling arm.

"Poppy, my darling, don't grieve so. It is for a short time, and I would not leave you at all, darling, were I not really obliged to do so. But business calls me, and I must go. I have so much to tell you when I return. You must meet me here the evening I return. Poppy, and then, together, we will go to Brookdeane Farm, and ask Aunt Susan's consent. My dear one, will you trust me till then?"

"I shall always trust you, Ernest dear, but I wish you were not leaving me."

"Why, Poppy? Surely you are not fancying that I shall not return?"

"I know you will if you can, dear; but—"

"But I am sure I shall, Poppy."

Another silence; another pause.

"Ernest, where is your home?"

"Ah!" gaily replied the young man, "that is my secret, Poppy, and a secret that I shall not be at liberty to divulge until my return. But my darling will trust me in that also, I feel sure, when I tell her that it is my great wish that she will wait for her answer awhile. Is it not so, Poppy?"

"I am content to wait, Ernest," was the simple reply.

"And my darling shall not have long to wait. As I said before, a few short weeks and all will be explained, and we shall both be looking forward to our new home. As for my little Poppy's people, I do not wish to know more about them than she cares to tell me, and I am quite content in knowing dear 'Aunt Susan.'"

"Ah, Ernest, I forgot!" exclaimed the girl, excitedly, as she strove to disengage herself from the protecting arm.

"Forgot what, my darling?" anxiously asked Ernest Leigh, glancing down with proud and happy look upon his companion.

"Forgot that I had not told you that I possess no relations. Aunt Susan told me all about it the very day that I first saw you—"

"Ah, how well I remember that day, Poppy!" broke in her lover.

"Yes; that night Aunt Susan told me all; that she knew, at least."

"And what was it, darling?"

"That I am not really her niece, only her adopted niece. For it seems I was left just inside the garden gate one night in February, about twelve or thirteen years ago. Aunt Susan found me there the next morning. I was half dead with cold and hunger. She took me in, and then, for weeks, Aunt Susan says I was ill with a fever, and when I recovered I had forgotten everything about my past life. Of course, I was but very young, but still I did not remember anything of the people I had been with."

Poppy Butler paused, and glanced anxiously up into Ernest Leigh's face to note the effect her history produced.

"Poor little Poppy! And that is all you know of yourself, my darling?"

"Yes, Ernest."

"Ah! I had thought there was no true relationship between you and the mistress of Brookdeane Farm. Much as I respect Mrs. Butler, your adopted aunt, still I have always seen and noted the great difference existing betwixt aunt and niece."

"Dear Aunt Susan, how I love her!" exclaimed the girl.

"Yes, darling, I daresay you do. But some day, Poppy, your own friends will come forward and claim you. Later on, when you are my wife, Poppy, we may meet them in that society which will be so different from anything you have ever experienced, my darling."

"Yes, that would be nice," murmured the girl, glancing down into the quickly flowing water, with a soft, dreamy look in her beautiful eyes.

"Ah, Poppy, it will all come true, darling, believe me, when—but I must not let out my secret!" broke off Ernest Leigh, with laughing eyes and contented look.

"But, Ernest, dear, are you content to take me now that you know my story?" asked the girl.

"My darling! Surely you could not doubt me for an instant?" was Ernest's eager response.

A sigh of satisfaction escaped his companion.

"Poppy," her lover continued, "I have known you now for some months, and I am quite willing to take you with your parentage and your former life shrouded, as it is, in a mystery, for I feel sure your friends will come forward to claim you some day, and those friends will be among the aristocracy of the land. I am sure of it, darling! Meanwhile, I ask you for your love and trust, darling, and then we must wait for all the mystery to be unveiled. Are you willing, Poppy?"

"Ernest dear, you have my entire trust and love now and for always," earnestly responded the girl.

And then, as the first silver stars appeared in the opal-hued sky, their lips met in one long, passionate kiss. Then along, and arm-in-arm, Ernest Leigh and Poppy Butler

wended their way back to Brookdeane Farm. Sweet and many were the protestations of love and faith interchanged as the lovers passed on their way through the dewy meadows and cornfield, rich with its thousand golden ears, where the poppies were hanging their dew-laden heads, and nodding, even as they slept, in the gentle evening breeze.

"Poppy, once I asked you for your flowers, and I was refused them," murmured Ernest Leigh, as they were half across the field.

A quick, gushing look from the violet eyes was Poppy Butler's only response. Her companion understood the look, and hastened to explain.

"Ah, Poppy, you did not really believe that evening that I wanted your flowers for another than myself?"

"Ah, it was not true then?"

"True! Of course not, dear! I was only trying my little Poppy, and her answer, and never told me that I was not wrong in supposing that she would yet learn to love me."

"Ah, if I had but known then; but it does not matter now. It only showed me how I loved you, Ernest."

"My darling, now I am going once more to ask you for your flowers, and I feel sure that this time they will not be refused me. Can you spare them, darling? I shall so value them. They will speak to me of my darling during the next few weeks that we must be parted. Not that I shall require anything to remind me of my darling."

"But, Ernest, these are fading fast. I will pick some more."

"No, no, Poppy, let me have those that you are wearing. They will be sweeter and dearer to me since my love has worn them."

With smiling face Poppy Butler unfastened the knot of simple wild-flowers, and gave them to her lover.

"Thank you, my darling," he whispered, as he received them. "I shall keep these in safety till we meet again."

"You promise, Ernest."

"I promise, Poppy, and I will keep my promise. When we meet next I will give you back your flowers, and you must give me what I value much more—a kiss from your own sweet lips. So that's an agreement, Poppy?"

"Yes, Ernest?"

But now the garden gate was reached, and a distant clock struck the half-hour.

"Half-past nine!" exclaimed the girl. "What will Aunt Susan say? I must be going, Ernest."

"Then good-bye, my darling, till we meet again. I shall not write to you Poppy, as it might only bring you trouble, as Aunt Susan is still in ignorance of our present relationship. But the time will seem short, I hope; and then, my love, we shall meet once more!"

One long passionate kiss and then Ernest Leigh and Poppy Butler parted from one another; the one to return through the daisy meads and golden corn fields to the little inn—his present home; the other to steal with light steps through the open door, and on upstairs into her pretty bedroom to lay aside her hat. Later on Poppy Butler's small head, with its golden tresses, tossed restlessly to and fro on the white pillow in the moonlight; while the pretty lips unclosed every now and then as their owner murmured,—

"Oh! Ernest, Ernest, I wish you would not leave me. What if you should not return to me!"

And then the tears came for a time. Finally tired nature had her own way, and golden-crowned head and fair lips were still at last.

Lady Lennox and her friend, Mrs. Mildmay, were sitting on the lawn at Mildmay Park. The afternoon was bright and warm, or rather hot—such weather as comes in August.

Silence fell between the friends for a brief space—a silence broken by the hostess, as she said, softly, and with a gentle caress of her friend's hand, which she had taken,—

"Julia, I thought, perhaps, you had forgotten."

"I never could forget, Grace! The scene, and its remembrance, are as fresh as ever in my memory. My poor child!"

"But, Julia, dear!" continued Mrs. Mildmay; "surely you do not think that our pretty village belle is—"

"Yes; I believe she is my long-lost child, and about to be restored to me, Grace!" exclaimed Lady Lennox, rising hastily from her low garden-seat, and speaking excitedly, while her eyes again filled with tears—eyes just such as were the girl's of whom they spoke.

"Well, dear," replied Mrs. Mildmay, "I will call with you to-morrow morning, if you like, and we can then see and speak with Poppy, and also hear afresh Mrs. Butler's tale respecting her."

"Why not go to-day, Grace?"

"I cannot, dear, unfortunately, since we have people coming to dinner; but I will go the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, dear Grace," responded Lady Lennox, as she stooped and kissed her friend's cheek; then added, cheerfully, "Ah! I forgot! My old friend, Hugo Ralston, dines here to-night, and he has promised me an hour's chat over old times, as we row up and down the stream, in the full blaze of the August moon."

"How I envy you, Julia! And I must sit quite still in my drawing-room, and make myself agreeable to all these country parsons and their fat, sober wives. Ah, well! the longest and dullest dinner-party must have an end! So I will be patient. Now let us stroll along to the conservatory, and choose our flowers wherewith to create living feelings in the bosoms of our more giddy country neighbours, as they compare our stylish costumes with their own gowns of country texture and home manufacture."

Several hours later and Lady Lennox was treading the small path leading down to the boathouse. With one hand she lifted daintily her rich silken skirts from the dewy grass, while with the other she held under her chin the crimson Cashmere wraps she had thrown over her dark head.

"What a splendid night for our chat by moonlight, Lady Lennox!" exclaimed the man who was accompanying her, as the pair turned a sudden corner, and the pretty stream appeared in sight, its waters rippling musically 'neath the silvery rays of the round moon.

"Glorious!" his companion replied, as she stopped for a moment to admire the scene.

"Ah, and here is the boat!" Hugo Ralston continued, as he peered round the corner of the small boathouse.

Ten minutes later and the two—Lady Lennox and Hugo Ralston—were floating down the stream, floating down towards the small wooden bridge before mentioned. A sigh broke from the former as they neared the spot.

"Lady Lennox, shall I turn the boat?" quietly asked Hugo Ralston, for he knew well the sad story which was now rife in his companion's brain.

No audible reply—nothing save a faint shake of the crimson-covered head. And Hugo Ralston again applied himself to his oars, and onward the little boat skimmed.

"Dear Lady Lennox, let us turn back if it so distresses you!" again broke forth the man's voice, in low, tender tones, as a sob succeeded to the sigh.

"No, no! Hugo! Let us go further on!" muttered Lady Lennox. "It is over now, Hugo. I could not help remembering it all just then. We were at the exact spot, Hugo!"

"Poor little Poppy!" murmured Hugo Ralston, as he leaned awhile on his oar, and gazed thoughtfully, in turn, at the banks on either side. "And you have never heard more, dear Lady Lennox?"

"Never, Hugo!"

"She may yet be restored to you."

"May be. Still, I do not feel so certain that she perished in the water, Hugo!"

"No, Lady Lennox?"

"No, Hugo. I will tell you my secret. I believe my daughter still lives, and that she is not far distant from me."

"Ah, that is good news!" joyously exclaimed Hugo Ralston.

"Yes, Hugo. I believe I saw her yesterday, and not far from this spot. She was leaning against the trunk of one of these old willows. Her hat was off, and I fancied I detected the very mark, just over the left eye, that—But, Hugo, what is that?"

Lady Lennox rose and pointed with her fair hand towards a large and bent willow upon the left bank, about a yard from the little wooden bridge. The light boat rocked and swayed for an instant. Then, even as Hugo Ralston's lips opened to question further, a something, being the outline of a human figure was seen clearly in the bright moonlight, seated on the bent willow, seated just where its branches drooped over and kissed the waters. Seen for an instant only! Then, with a dull groan, the figure dropped downward from its insecure perch, and the bright rippling waters closed over it.

A slight scream and an exclamation followed from the occupants of the boat. Then Hugo Ralston watched eagerly for the reappearance of the faintest speck of white upon the waters.

It came after a few seconds; and then hastily divesting himself of hat and coat, he sprang over the boat's edge, and plunged into the moonlit waters.

"Save her, Hugo! Save her!" cried Lady Lennox, in piercing tones, as she stood with clasped hands and eager-strained eyes, watching the floating white object.

A few minutes later, and the same was laid, dripping and motionless, at the bottom of the small boat; while uplifting the pretty face, with its closed eyelids, and peering into the same face with an intense anxiousness and eagerness was Lady Lennox.

"Hugo, you have saved my child! How can I thank you?" the latter whispered, as her deep violet eyes, full of great gratitude, were fastened on her companion.

"Your child, Lady Lennox!" echoed the man in astonishment.

"Yes," she replied, "my own sweet child! Ay, I should know her among a thousand by this."

Her fingers pointed to a small mark—scarcely noticeable to a stranger—upon the white face of the unconscious girl at her feet.

"Dear Lady Lennox, I congratulate you most sincerely," replied Hugo Ralston.

Then ejaculated, as his gaze fell upon the fair, sweet oval face, framed with its cloud of fair hair.—

"How lovely! Oh! you ask me how I can be rewarded. I will not reply to that question now, as I think it most advisable that I use all speed to run the boat back to the landing-place and fetch assistance. But one day, dear Lady Lennox, I may remind you of your words. Now for home."

A few rapid strokes from Hugo Ralston's powerful arms, and the small craft shot down the stream, and soon was at the landing-stage.

Half-an-hour later, and Poppy Butler lay between the blankets in her own mother's room at Mildmay Park.

"And now for my revenge!" mentally exclaimed Adeline Merton, as she laid down the letter she had been perusing at her breakfast-table in her Kensington home, and carried it away, with others, to her morning-room.

Mrs. Moles, her companion, was absent in deep consultation with the housekeeper.

"Yes! now for my revenge!" continued Adeline, as she settled herself before her davenport. "Let me first read again the letter. Really, Bates writes a very good hand, and the spelling is not so much amiss, considering she is but a maid. Now then, let me see."

Adeline Merton drew forth once again the letter from its envelope, and, after glancing lightly at the first page, turned over, and read in a low tone the following:—

"I have found out everything that you want to know, miss. The young girl is very pretty indeed, and I am sure I could not wonder or be surprised at young master's falling in love with her, if there was not someone else who had ought to be his wife. You must excuse my saying it out plainlike, miss; but, of course, all of us in the servants' hall have talked it over many a time. Well, young master did not give his real name, not even to this young girl; for one day I met her, and I asked her if she could tell me anything about a 'Mr. Leigh,' who had been staying at the inn. And she knew the name at once, and said he was gone away, but that he was coming back again. I laughed to myself when I heard that, for I thought my dear mistress would do her best to stop that little affair. I should if he were my young man. And now, dear and honored miss, when am I to send to?"

"There! That's quite enough of that. And now one look at the address, and the girl's name, and then your letter, Miss Bates, can be put in the fire, and so will never rise up as witness against me. Your tongue will be quite silenced when you see the dresses I have put aside for you."

Adeline laid the letter down before her, and, taking an envelope and paper, traced in a bold, manly hand the address before her.

"Now, let me compare the writings. Ah! very good—would quite pass for Ernest's," she continued, as she surveyed critically and compared the writing before her with some other she drew from her pocket.

Then, letting both papers slip from her hold, she leant back in her chair, and gave herself up to thought. So deep were her thoughts that she started quickly when a voice broke the stillness of the room.

"Miss Merton, I am afraid I am disturbing you—you look and seem so engrossed with your own thoughts?"

"What is it, Mrs. Moles?"

"I am not come to hinder you. I only brought the paper in; I had taken it to my own room for a few minutes to copy the address of some housemaid whom I think may suit you. I hope you haven't wanted the paper, Miss Merton?"

"Not at all, Mrs. Moles. You can put it down there. I can't attend to it just at present, as I have some important writing to attend to."

"Very well, Miss Merton. I shall be in the housekeeper's room should you require me," replied Mrs. Moles, as she turned to quit the room.

Adeline simply bowed her head in response; and then the door closed, and she was once again alone with her thoughts.

"How can I have my revenge?" she murmured, glancing at the directed envelope before her. "What tone shall it take? A direct falsehood will be useless, if he is really returning again. No! It must be something more conclusive than that. Dear me, I can't think of it now; I will see what is in the paper first."

Stretching forth her hand she took the newspaper from the small table where Mrs. Moles had laid it, and then opening it ran her eyes down the list of "Deaths, Births, and Marriages." Suddenly her whole face cleared, and with flushed cheeks and sparkling eye she turned again to her davenport, took from it a sheet of note-paper, then taking up a pair of scissors from a neighbouring table, she proceeded to cut out a slip from the list of marriages.

"How fortunate that he should have used that name!" she murmured softly, sticking the little slips containing the few printed words to the clean sheet of paper by the aid of a little gum. "Now, Miss Poppy, we shall see who wins—you or I. Even if you win in the end I shall be satisfied, for I am sure

many a day of sorrow is before you ere you again hold sweet converse with your lover! Now to post it at once, lest my conscience should win the day."

Rising with a triumphant, not cruel, smile on her face, Adeline Merton repaired to her own room, taking with her the letters she had received that morn, and also the one she intended posting.

"Ah! if I did not love him so much!" she sighed, later on, as she sat 'neath the trees in the gardens, and listened, carelessly and indifferently, to the soft tones and gentle words of a certain "Jack Holt," as handsome a man as one could well wish to bask in woman's smiles.

But he was not the one Adeline Merton desired. There lay the secret bitterness, which only her heart knew of.

"Ah! Mrs. Butler, how are you?"

The mistress of Brookdean Farm started, and then glanced up from the cuttings she was taking from the late-blooming geraniums in her small front-garden.

"Mr. Leigh!" she exclaimed, dropping the flower-pot she held in her hand with a crash.

"Yes, Mrs. Butler. You seem very surprised to see me?"

"Ah, well, I may be surprised at the smallest event now," sententiously replied the good woman, as she set about to collect the pieces of the broken flower-pot.

"Can I help you with those pieces, Mrs. Butler, since it was owing to me that the pot got broken?"

"Oh, no! I may just as well do it myself. I never get any help from anyone nowadays. But it does not matter. I am getting old, and shall not last much longer, perhaps."

Ernest Leigh looked on in astonishment. Could this be the Mrs. Butler whom he had left so cheerful and so pleasant, as he had always found her before? What had changed her thus?

Ah! perhaps she had thought he had played Poppy false! Yes, she must have guessed how he loved her; and then, when no news of him had come she must have suspected him of playing her niece false!

"Poor dear old soul!" he ejaculated, inwardly. "That's what's the matter with her." Then aloud, "I thought I caught a glimpse of your niece in the distance as I walked up here, Mrs. Butler. I hope she is well."

"Who did you say, Mr. Leigh?" asked the old lady, turning round upon him quickly, and speaking in a high and excited voice.

"Your niece, Mrs. Butler—Miss Poppy!" and then as the dear familiar name left his lips his companion gasped forth with a sob.

"Oh, please, do not mention that name!" And then the good old lady drew forth her handkerchief and burst into tears.

Ernest Leigh stood lost in amazement; but his anxiety was too great to let him remain patiently by while his companion indulged freely in her sorrow, whatever it might be.

"Dear Mrs. Butler, what has happened? Do not keep me in suspense, but tell me all! If you only knew how interested I am in Miss Poppy's welfare—"

"You interested, Mr. Leigh?"

"Very much so, Mrs. Butler."

"Then I am very sorry for you, Mr. Leigh, for I do not believe you will ever meet her again. Nor I either," sobbed Mrs. Butler, turning away, and leading the way to the house.

Ber visitor followed her as in a dream. Mechanically he trod the familiar path, and passed in through the open front door, and turned into the small parlour.

"Sit down, Mr. Leigh, please, and then I will tell you all."

Ernest Leigh obeyed, and after a preliminary wipe of her eyes Mrs. Butler began her tale.

"It was about three weeks ago that one bright morn a letter came for my Poppy. I was at the door when the postman came, and so I took it in. I turned it over a good bit, for the address was in a gentleman's handwriting

—a good, dashing hand; but the postmarks were so faint that I could not tell where it came from. I gave it to Poppy when she came down, and asked her who it was from; but she only got very red, and said she did not know till she opened it. I said no more then, and as I was busy all that day I quite forgot to ask her about it again. That evening I went down into the village and called in to see old Mrs. Troke, and, as she so pressed me, I stayed to supper with her. About half-past nine I came home, and found Poppy was out. Jane told me she thought she had gone down to the little bridge (for she was always down there), so I thought I would go down and meet her. I did not like her being out so late by herself. It was a beautiful bright moonlight night, and the river looked pretty-like in the distance. I had just set one foot on the bridge when I heard a splash, and then a scream. I rushed on, and there below I saw—”

Poor Mrs. Butler! Her feelings were too great for her, and again she broke into tears.

“Saw what, Mrs. Butler?”

No answer, but sobs.

“For Heaven’s sake!” broke in again her visitor, “do not keep me thus in suspense!”

“Oh, Mr. Leigh! did you love my Poppy?”

“Love her—I should think so!”

“Oh, dear—oh, dear! How sorry you will be then to hear—”

“Tell me the worst at once! She can’t be dead, or—”

“Dead? No, not quite so bad as that; but she is lost to me, and I am afraid to you, too, Mr. Leigh.”

“How?”

“Well, you see, I came on the bridge just as she fell into the water. She had been sitting on the trunk of one of those old willows, and somehow she slipped off.”

“And who saved her?”

“A lady and gentleman from the Park were rowing up the stream, and the gentleman jumped into the water and saved her!”

“And then?”

“Ah, Mr. Leigh, now comes the saddest part of all! The lady who was in the boat was my Poppy’s mother.”

“Poppy’s mother!” exclaimed her listener, forgetting in his interest and excitement that he was using her Christian name.

“Yes, her own mother beyond a doubt; and—oh, dear! oh, dear!—she has taken my Poppy away with her, and I shall never see her more.”

“Cheer up, Mrs. Butler. I believe you will see her again, and that before very long.”

“What do you mean, sir? Have you seen her since she left Bourton? Her mother told me she was going to take her on the Continent, whatever that may be.”

“Gone abroad, eh!” mused Ernest Leigh, as he reflected for a few seconds. “Then I am afraid I shall not be able to bring her back to you for some time, Mrs. Butler. I must first find her for myself. You must know I am very vexed and very disappointed, Mrs. Butler, to find Miss Poppy gone, for I had returned here purposely to ask your consent to Miss Poppy’s becoming my wife.”

“Your wife, Mr. Leigh?”

“Yes, my wife,” smilingly replied the young man. “Why, do you think it so strange that I should love her?”

“Not at all, Mr. Leigh! Love her! Who could help it? But—”

“Well, speak out, Mrs. Butler, and tell me your objections.”

“I have no objections, sir—none at all. I would willingly give my consent if that were all; but, sir, you must not be offended, but my Poppy’s mother is a grand lady. Has a title, too. Lady—Lady—I can’t remember it exactly, and you will excuse me, sir, I am sure.”

“Certainly, certainly, Mrs. Butler; I quite understand you. You do not think this proud lady would care for her daughter to wed with a comparatively poor man like myself—eh, Mrs. Butler?”

“Well, sir, if you will excuse my saying that—”

“No more excuses, Mrs. Butler. I have also my secret. I am not simply the ‘Mr. Leigh’ that you have been accustomed to consider me. I, also, have a title, and am what the world considers a rich man; so I still hope to bring back your niece to see you when she is my wife.”

“Well, to be sure!” replied Mrs. Butler, dropping curtsey upon curtsey.

“Yes, Mrs. Butler, I have a very good chance, and I shall yet hope to succeed.”

“Well, I am sure, sir, I hope you will.”

“Thank you. Now I must be going, as I shall now return by the next train. Good-bye, Mrs. Butler.”

“Good-bye, sir!” responded the mistress of Brookdean Farm, giving her deepest curtsey, and showed her visitor out to the door with the greatest ceremony.

“Now to find my darling!” exclaimed Ernest Leigh, or Sir Ernest Leigh Landon, as we must henceforth call him, as he settled himself comfortably in a corner of the first-class carriage, and was whirled away towards his home at Leigh Towers.

Not a shadow of doubt was there in his mind, only a feeling of sore disappointment that he had to wait yet awhile ere again seeing his darling—only that; but no shadow of doubt as to how she would receive him now that her position in life was so changed. Ah! would that some sprite from the fairy world could have brought him tidings respecting the cruel missive dealt by a woman’s hand, who harmed him so deeply that her love needed a deep revenge to enhance it.

“Poppy you have made two people very happy indeed.”

Poppy Lennox, as we must now call her, started slightly as the low, sweet tones fell on her ear—started slightly as she reclined lazily amid the soft cushions of her own prettily-furnished boudoir, while a shadow crossed her face, but no reply, no answering smile betokened that she had heard her mother’s words.

“What! dreaming, Poppy? Ah! it is very excusable, considering the circumstances, and that Hugo has but just left you. My dear Poppy, I am so pleased!”

Lady Lennox crossed gracefully to where sat her daughter, and bending low laid her lips upon the pure white forehead round which curled, so profusely, the golden hair.

“I did it to please you, mamma,” then spoke the girl, but there was no bright flush on her face as she spoke thus calmly of the important step in life that she had so lately sealed.

“Not to please me alone, my darling, I hope!”

“I could not refuse the man who had once saved my life, mamma! You once said that to me, and I have learnt the lesson well.”

“My dear child, do not talk of your engagement to Hugo Ralston as a mere duty. Surely you have some love to give him, the man, besides a certain amount of gratitude?” echoed Lady Lennox, as she surveyed her daughter with flushed face.

“Love for Hugo Ralston!” echoed the girl, in low, far-off tones, which tones further increased her mother’s annoyance and vexation.

“Poppy, child! what is the matter with you? You surely do not mean to insinuate by your manner that your heart has already been bestowed upon some one of the village rustics at Bourton?”

A deep flush suffused Poppy Lennox’s face, then quickly faded away and left her very pale.

“Not a village rustic, mamma,” she began, but the proud and haughty Belgravian mother would hear no further.

“That is quite sufficient, Poppy. A little *affaire de cœur* was all very well in such a quiet place as Bourton; but now, in your present position, you must forget all that, and

be ready and willing to accept the man who considers even himself to be honoured with thus securing the hand and *heart* of the lovely daughter of Lady Lennox.”

So saying, Lady Lennox once again touched lightly her daughter’s white forehead; then the door closed, and Poppy Lennox was alone—alone with her own thoughts!

She sat absorbed in these latter for some time after her mother had left her; then, rising, she crossed the room, and advancing to a small table standing in a recess she seated herself before it, and pressing a small ivory knob at one side a secret drawer flew open.

It was empty save for one single envelope—an envelope that had been evidently torn open with hasty fingers, for the jagged and uneven edges testified to the same. Lifting the envelope from its resting-place, Poppy Lennox glanced slowly and steadily at the address thereon—gazed long at the characters in the bold, manly hand; then opened the envelope and drew forth a blank sheet of paper. It was folded in two.

Unfolding the same, Poppy sighed deeply as her gaze fell upon the small slip of printed paper fastened to the blank sheet; sighed deeply, while the tears gathered in her eyes, as she perused the few lines running thus:—

“Leigh—Dyke—July 23, at St. Philip’s, Dalston. Ernest Leigh, of Camborne, to Evelyn, daughter of John Dyke of Rainsford!”

This was all.

But the few lines were all-sufficient to cause the tears to flow fast and freely from Poppy Lennox’s deep violet eyes.

This, then, was the reason of his deserting her—this the reason why he had given her no explanation respecting the same absence. Ah! what had she done that he should thus have so treated her; thus had been so false.

Still she loved him, and, loving him thus, was unwillingly betrothing herself to another. And yet she knew that other had some claim upon her love; for had he not saved her life?

As she remembered this she slowly and sadly replaced the sheet of paper within its covering, and restored both within the drawer.

The ivory knob was again in requisition, and then Poppy Lennox bent her arms sadly upon the davenport and gave way to her feelings.

Lights were gleaming from hall and window. Carriages lined thickly the road in front of Harlech House, the town residence of Lady Lennox.

The London season was at its height. On the wide staircase, making their way slowly to the reception-rooms, were all the elite of aristocratic Belgravians—on their way to pay homage to Lady Lennox.

The latter stood in a small ante-room, and at her side was her lately-restored daughter, already the acknowledged belle of the London drawing-rooms.

Very handsome looked the hostess in her rich laces and sparkling diamonds. Very lovely was her fair daughter, as she received with pretty, smiling face the congratulations showered upon her—distasteful as they were to her.

Close by, and sharing those congratulations, was her betrothed, Hugo Ralston, a man of about forty-five, of tall figure and strikingly handsome appearance, but looking his age.

The rooms were filling fast, and Hugo Ralston, whispering to his bride-elect, suggested that they should adjourn to the conservatory awhile and seek a few minutes’ relief from the extreme heat and crush.

Mechanically she acquiesced, and the two were soon seated ‘neath the shelter of some towering pillars.

“Poppy, I can scarcely believe it to be a reality when I reflect that but a few days elapse, and then—”

“Hugo, I wish you would bring me some coffee, please,” interrupted his companion.

She smiled so sweetly as she spoke that Hugo Ralston forgave the interruption, and hurried away to do her bidding.

And then Poppy Lennox, believing herself to be quite hidden from observation, drew forth from the bosom of her dress a small packet—sealed.

Opening it with trembling fingers she drew forth a knot of withered flowers—nothing more! No line to tell of the sender. Nor did she need it.

Too well she remembered the place, the occasion, where and when the same flowers had passed from her possession into another's.

Kissing them tenderly, she laid her soft red lips on the brown, withered petals; then, hearing the approaching *frou-frou* of a woman's skirt, she hurriedly returned the packet to its place of safety, and glanced up to see who was the intruder.

"Ah! Miss Lennox, I am indeed fortunate," rang out in the clear tones of Adeline Merton.

"I am pleased to meet you again, Miss Merton," replied our heroine, as she moved aside her azure skirts to make way for Adeline Merton.

"Thanks! How delightfully cool it is here! I am waiting for any event to bring me some refreshment."

"And I also am in like position, Miss Merton, for—"

Poppy Lennox stopped short in her words, while the colour gradually faded from her cheeks.

"Miss Lennox, you are ill!" cried her companion, as she noted the sudden pallor.

"It is nothing, merely the heat. I shall be better presently, when Mr. Ralston brings my coffee. But who is that gentleman passing by the bank of heliotrope? There are so many here that are quite strangers to me."

"Oh! But I did not think Sir Ernest Landon was entirely a stranger to you, Miss Lennox? At least," Adeline Merton continued, as she secretly watched her companion's face, "I have often heard him speak of you."

"Speak of me, Miss Merton?"

"Yes, indeed. But then you both met each other under other names than those you now bear, so that that circumstance may account for it; and Ernest is sadly altered of late—seems so unlike his usual self."

"Other names!"

"Yes. Sir Ernest Landon was staying at Bourton as plain 'Ernest Leigh,' and you, Miss Lennox, were known to him as 'Miss Butler.'"

"Ernest Leigh!" gasped Adeline Merton's listener, with white eyes.

"Yes, Miss Lennox. A quarrel—domestic—obliged Sir Ernest to leave his home for a time, and he chose Bourton."

"And his wife—is she with him tonight?"

"His wife, Miss Lennox?"

"Yes."

"Sir Ernest Landon is not married, nor likely to be, from all I hear. Some other—But you are surely feeling faint, Miss Lennox? Ah, here comes Mr. Ralston. I can't leave you in better hands. I will stroll round in search of my escort, for I am fairly fainted."

With smiling face, but cruel thoughts in her heart, Adeline Merton rose and left the girl she had so cruelly wronged sitting with fixed hands and bent head.

"I have had part of my revenge already," Adeline murmured to herself as she strolled away, amid the fair and fragrant flowers, in the direction lately taken by Sir Ernest Landon. "And but three days more, and she will be the wife of Hugo Ralston; and then, perhaps, when all hope is gone, he may—"

Here the beautiful brown eyes grew soft, as this woman thought of the man for whom she still entertained some sparks of the passion that had bred such bitter hate, and been the instigation of such cruel revenge.

"A splendid morning for the hounds, Landon!" exclaimed Jack Holt to his friend

and host, Sir Ernest Landon, as the latter crossed the lawn at Leigh Towers on his way to the breakfast-room after his usual morning's inspection of kennel and stable.

For the owner of Leigh Towers was still unmarried. Thus, more than two years had sped since that bright summer evening when he had stood side by side on the little rustic bridge, and murmured his love-vows into the pretty pink ear of Poppy Butler.

But, shortly after the latter's marriage with Hugo Ralston, Sir Ernest had returned to Leigh Towers, and devoted himself thoroughly to field-sports. At present he had staying with him several men of college acquaintance, who were glad enough to get an invite for a few days' hunting with the Leigh Towers hounds.

Chief among the assembled company and most intimate with the host was Jack Holt, a young man about the same age as Sir Ernest.

"Glorious morning, indeed, Jack! What a splendid run we shall have! Now, what do you say to some breakfast to fortify the inner man? We shall need it before our return."

Saying, Sir Ernest led the way to the breakfast-room, where were assembled the rest of his house party, all fully equipped for the forthcoming hunt. Nodding right and left Sir Ernest seated himself at the head of the table, and soon the room rang with the play of knives and forks, mingled with gay voices and hearty laughter.

Three hours later and Sir Ernest Landon was alone at the entrance to a narrow lane. The fox started that morning by his hands had proved a "game" one; all the horses and their riders had had hard work to follow Reynard. Over heavy, ploughed fields and through narrow, muddy lanes the hunt had sped, and then, just as the hounds were right upon their prey, the wily fox had run to earth.

A party of hangers-on was called in at once to assist in the unearthing; and in the meantime Sir Ernest had turned his horse's head, and walked the animal slowly away from the rest, for he wanted to be alone just then, and be alone with his thoughts—wanted to nerve himself for a great undertaking. And this?

A few months previously he had heard of the death of Hugo Ralston—her husband; and from the very moment the news arrived the old love revived, and the longing came back in full force to at once repair to her and ask for an explanation.

The news of her engagement to Hugo Ralston had been a severe shock to him, but his pride forbade his intruding. He denied that she, being ignorant of his real position in society, had done as many others might have done in her case—discarded the unpretentious suitor of the small village for the wealthy and well-known *habitus* of Belgravian circles.

The only intimation he had given her of his presence was the returning of the withered knot of flowers, delivered on the same night that he had purposely attended her mother's reception—attended it, vainly hoping that the sight of the wild flowers might cause a reaction in his favour.

That hope had been a delusive one. Now that she was free once again all his old hopes and longings returned; and as he walked his horse slowly along the muddy way he was, in fancy, going over the meeting which he was planning after his own design.

"She must return such love as I have given her," he murmured to himself, and a smile irradiated his face as he thought of the blissful moment when again he should hear the sweet words from her lips. "My own darling Poppy," he whispered full softly, "how I shall—"

"Ernest."

The interruption came from Adeline Merton, who, in mire-bespattered habit, came down the lane, her fiery mare foaming and fretting to break away and be after the hounds once

more, whose deep baying was heard in the distance.

"Adeline, you out to-day, and on Brunette again! Do you think it is wise?"

"Wise, Ernest? What does a broken neck signify so me?"

"Why, what has happened, Adeline, that you should thus be willing to give up all the fair things of this world?" good-temperedly asked Sir Ernest, bending slightly forward to lay his hand on the glossy neck of the spirited Brunette.

Adeline Merton glanced keenly at the hand-some face, and for an instant there gleamed a look of tenderness—nay, *love*—in the beautiful brown eyes. Only for an instant. Then she broke forth again in harsh, cold tones.

"I do not care for all the 'fair things' of this world, as you term them. They have all lost their fancies and charm for me, Ernest," she added, in a lower tone and sadly, glancing meanwhile at her companion's face.

The latter flushed slightly as he replied,—

"I am sorry for that, Adeline. You, so handsome, so wealthy, so—"

"You can't add 'so loved,' Ernest," interrupted Adeline Merton.

Her companion started slightly; then made reply,—

"So loved, Adeline!"

"By whom?" sternly and sharply asked.

"By one whom I admire and respect more than any man I know."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Adeline; I have not been asked to plead his suit. He hopes to do that soon for himself; but I should be more than pleased to see united two whom I believe are—"

"I believe you are talking great nonsense, Sir Ernest Landon."

The words were spoken so sweetly that their rudeness did not seem so offensive at first sound.

"Yes," continued the speaker, in her clear, sweet tones, "yes, Sir Ernest Landon—Ernest, you know full well that there is only one man upon this earth whom I would ever wed, and he—Ah, it is for his sake, because he will not wed me, that I care not whether I come to grief by my foolhardiness in riding a spirited horse or not."

Tears filled the beautiful brown eyes; the clear notes quivered slightly.

"Adeline, it can never be! But I hope yet to see you happy with my old friend Jack Holt. He has—"

"Say no more, Ernest. This is the last time I shall forget myself, and plead for love from a man who cares naught for me, though I would have given my life even for him! Farewell!"

So saying, and waving her dainty riding-whip aloft in the air, Adeline Merton brought it smartly down upon the mare's neck, and then—

Ah, what a fearful sight met Sir Ernest Landon's gaze as, ten minutes later, he came upon the body of the fallen mare, and noted a few yards ahead the prostrate form of a woman! One glance at the face, so ashen-hued, and then Sir Ernest galloped off for assistance.

* * * * *

"Ernest."

"Yes, Adeline."

"Ah, you have come, then, to hear my last confession?"

Sir Ernest bowed his head in silence as he stood with folded arms at the side of the bed, whereon lay the proud and beautiful Adeline Merton, never more to rise therefrom. Such was the case. The physician's flat had gone forth; and no mortal skill could avail to heal the poor crushed lady.

"Ernest," once again in weak tones.

"Yes, Adeline."

"Sit down there."

He obeyed at once, and seated himself in the chair her glance betokened.

"Now, please, let us be alone for the last few moments of my life."

She was obeyed; and as the door closed on

nurse and housekeeper (for she had been brought to Leigh Towers), the faint voice again broke forth,—

“ Ernest, you will forgive me, and you will seal that forgiveness of binding with your lips, since you need not fear. *She* will never know unless you tell her.”

“ Tell me what it is that needs my forgiveness, Adeline,” gently replied Sir Ernest.

“ Ernest, had I not loved you so well I could never have acted as I have. And *she* has had to suffer; and I am sorry now that I live here, and the end so near!”

“ *She* has had to suffer, Adeline! You can’t mean Poppy—”

“ Yes, yes, Poppy! that is her name! Poor little thing! And she thought you were married, and so she accepted Hugo Ralston, and pretended to have put aside all her great love for you. Yes, I know it all; and it was all my doing?”

“ Tell me all, Adeline, please,” gently said her listener; but his looks belied the tranquillity of his speech.

“ Yes, I will tell you all. Only you must first promise to forgive me as I have asked you.”

“ I promise.”

“ Ernest, I have always loved you, but my love was a passion rather; and when I found that you would rather endure exile than comply with your uncle’s wishes, then, Ernest, I vowed revenge, and I have had it. I found out—no matter how—all about Poppy Butler—learnt of your promise to return, and asked her of her aunt; and then the thought of how I could be revenged upon you for the slight you had shown me recurred to me, and I acted upon it successfully. A few weeks after your quitting her I accidentally saw, in one of the daily papers, the account of a marriage between an ‘Ernest Leigh’ and a certain ‘Evelyn Dyke.’ I knew well—no matter how I gained all my information—that you were using those two names before, and I cut out the—you are listening, Ernest?”

“ Yes, I am listening,” came the answer, gently spoken; but the face is turned away, that the dying woman might not be disturbed by the grey look thereon.

“ I cut out the paragraph and sent it her in an envelope. I had an old letter of yours in my possession, and I copied the characters so successfully that, when the letter was addressed, even you, yourself would scarcely have detected the difference. Yes! I sent her the announcement, and then, the very same day as she received it, she was claimed by her mother; and so—and so, you lost sight of her, Ernest. When next you met she was engaged to Hugo Ralston. All my doing; but all done for love for you, Ernest!”

The words died away in a whisper. Silence fell, only broken by the painful breathing of the sufferer.

“ Ernest.”

“ Yes, Adeline.”

“ Your forgiveness—and your kiss. Quick, or it may be too late.”

A hard task for Sir Ernest Landon. Still, it was the *last* request from dying lips, and must not be disregarded.

Murmuring softly but cheerfully,—

“ I forgive you, Adeline,” the man arose, and approaching the bed, laid his lips upon the poor drawn ones so eagerly uplifted to his.

A smile of perfect happiness flooded the heiress’s countenance, as she whispered forth,—

“ My love! my love!”

Then the brown eyes closed, the grey head fell heavily to the pillow again, and with one gentle sigh Adeline Merton’s spirit fled from earth!

And Sir Ernest Landon was alone with the dead!

Far away, in sunny Italy, Sir Ernest Landon met again his love. Let us follow them thither.

It was about nine o’clock in the evening. In a spacious and brilliantly-lit room sat

Poppy Ralston—Hugo Ralston’s fair young widow—sat with flushed face bent low over a magnificent bouquet of pure white flowers, which she held in one hand, while in the other was a small white card with fanciful letters engraved thereon.

Poppy Ralston surveyed each in turn, while her face flushed more and more, and the light in her violet eyes grew more and more brilliant and tender.

For the sight of these white blossoms recalled to her sweet memories of days—the happiest of her life!—but now so long ago!

“ We shall meet again, and very soon!” she murmured, as she glanced again at the characters on the card in her hand. “ Yes, we shall meet again—and then. Ah! I will take *these* with me to-night, in case I meet him.”

Rising, she advanced to a small table, near by, and unlocked a drawer, and took forth a small packet which she hid carefully away among the folds of the rich lace on her dress.

Scarcely had she again seated herself ere the heavy velvet curtains of the *portière* were drawn wide, and Lady Lennox entered.

“ Dressed, Poppy? That is right. But what lovely flowers! Ah, I can guess who is their sender!” smilingly added Lady Lennox, as she drew nearer her daughter and seated herself on a couch.

“ Can you, mamma?” replied the young widow. “ I am afraid you may be mistaken, for I have never met Sir Ernest Landon in your presence.”

“ Sir Ernest Landon!” almost screamed Lady Lennox. “ Why, Poppy, surely you will not reject the prince for a mere English baronet!”

“ Prince Galazzi has never yet done me the honour of asking for my hand, mamma; therefore I am free, as far as he is concerned, to accept another’s love,” calmly replied our heroine.

“ Tut, tut, Poppy. You know as well as I do that you are the only woman the Prince cares for; and now I must betray his secret, and tell you that he has always asked my permission to woo you, and that he intends this very night, at the Embassy Ball, to speak to you of his love. Ah, child, surely you would not be foolish enough to reject such a suitor!”

Poppy Ralston found a minute for reflection before replying. Meanwhile her eyes wandered to where lay her bouquet—*his* flowers.

Strengthened by the sight of their innocent petals she rose, and crossing to her mother’s side knelt low there; and taking her mother’s hand within hers said, with pretty penitent look on her happy face, and with sweet, entreating smile,—

“ Mamma, dear, do not urge me to again marry a man for whom I do not care! And do not be vexed with me if I say that I do not think the Prince will be quite inconsolable when I tell him that I have no love to bestow upon him. For—mamma, dear, you are sure you will not be vexed? But I heard him tell his brother, the Count, that he really did not know which he admired the most—the mother or the daughter! Of course he did not know I was near, for a curtain hid me from his sight. The daughter he cannot have, but—”

“ So no more, Poppy. Of course he will be very vexed when he hears your decision, and I shall feel it my duty to do my best to console him,” smilingly replied Lady Lennox.

Her vanity was gratified; and she inwardly determined that it should not be her fault if she were not some day mistress at the Hotel di Galazzi, so rich in its velvet hangings and costly curios.

“ We can winter with you whenever you wish it, mamma, dear,” continued her daughter, putting up her pretty flushed face for a kiss.

Lady Lennox bestowed it; and then tapping the golden head with her jewelled fan, replied,—

“ I do not know that I shall want you, then, Poppy!”

“ Ah, yes, you will, mamma, more than ever,” answered Poppy Ralston, rising quickly,

as the *portière* was swung aside, and a servant announced the carriage in waiting to take them to the evening’s festivities. An hour later and Poppy Ralston was threading the crowded ball-room upon the arm of Sir Ernest Landon.

“ A little more of this crush, and then we shall be free to talk over old times, Poppy!” remarked the latter, as he skilfully guided his fair companion through the brilliant crowd towards a small doorway.

Through the same, and down a nearer way, bordered on either side by flowering plants and delicate ferns; and then—

“ Once again we meet, Poppy!” broke from Sir Ernest’s lips, as he placed himself by the side of the woman he so loved in the small dingy-lit recess to which he had led her. His companion replied not; but her fingers played nervously at the pure white flowers she carried.

“ Poppy, are you willing to listen to my tale? Have you thought so very harshly of me ever since that night when I bade you farewell at your aunt’s garden-gate at Bourton—so long ago? For it has seemed very, very long ago to me; and I have been true to you ever since, Poppy; for I loved you so dearly!”

“ And I loved you all the time, Ernest; but I thought—at least I had a letter telling me that you were—”

“ I know all, Poppy. Do not let us talk of that now. She who wrought all the mischief is dead!”

“ I know now that it was not true, and that you did not send it. But tell me all, Ernest!”

“ First tell me that you love me still, Poppy. Oh, my darling! I have so longed for this meeting, that it would be cruel to shatter all my hopes! Poppy you will be mine, will you not, darling?” Very, very sweet looked Poppy Ralston, as she glanced up with such violet eyes into her lover’s handsome face, and made reply,—

“ Ernest, I have tried not to love you so much, for my love for you has been more than I could control at times. My marriage with Hugo Ralston was but a dream. I felt so stunned when I received that cruel letter that I cared not for anyone or anything, and consented to a marriage with the man who had saved my life, simply because, for the time, I believed you false. And it grieved me very much. Still I loved you. And now, Ernest—oh! Ernest, Ernest!—never leave me now! I could not bear another parting,” sobbed our heroine, as she laid her fair head against her lover’s breast, and felt his kisses on her lips.

“ We will never part again in this life, Poppy—my own darling!” murmured Sir Ernest, clasping to him the form of the only woman he had ever loved.

“ Now tell me all, please.”

“ Why distress yourself with the sad tale, Poppy?”

“ I would rather hear it, Ernest, dear.”

So sitting, hand clasped in hand, Sir Ernest obeyed.

“ Poppy, I left my father’s house because I would not wed the woman he had chosen for me. I had met you but once then, but my heart was fixed. I did not explain all this to my father, but I was firm in my refusal to wed *her*. And so I was exiled from my home; and at once I repaired to Bourton—your home. My father expired the very eve upon which he had sent to his solicitor to alter the will in favour of her, and thus disinherited his only son. So I succeeded to my lawful rights. I immediately hastened back to my darling’s home, only, alas! to find, from dear Mrs. Butler, that my darling Poppy had been claimed by her mother, and carried away to foreign shores. The next news that reached me was that my love was about to wed with another. I determined to try my chance once again, and so I sent the flowers, and attended Lady Lennox’s receptions. All in vain! But we will dwell no longer upon the past, my darling.”

“ But the letter, Ernest?”

"Was sent by her with whom I refused to wed, Poppy."

"And her name was Adeline Merton?" quietly asked Poppy Ralston.

Sir Ernest started slightly.

"Who told you, Poppy?"

"I guessed it, Ernest," was the simple reply; and he questioned no further.

"You are right, Poppy. She worked all the mischief, and brought upon us all the sorrow we have endured; but she was sorry before she died, and I forgave her, Poppy. Yes, I forgave her! I was sure my darling would wish me so to do, and it will only enhance our happiness to reflect that her spirit was set at rest by a few words of forgiveness from the lips of those she had so cruelly wronged. Poor Adeline!"

"She is dead, Ernest?"

"Yes, dear. I was with her when she breathed her last. It was her urgent wish, and I could not refuse."

Silence fell for a few seconds, while each seemed to be wrapt in contemplation of the present happiness.

Then Sir Ernest spoke again.

"Poppy, do you know I have not yet felt your soft lips against mine? Will not my darling bestow one kiss on one who has so longed for this moment?"

Instead of at once complying, Poppy Ralston drew from the folds of her costly dress a small packet, and, divesting it of its outside wrappings, drew forth a knot of brown withered flowers.

"Ernest!" she whispered, "you have forgotten our compact with respect to these, but I have not. Take them, and when you have properly returned them to me, I will—"

"Dear little flowers!" broke in Sir Ernest, as he raised them to his lips, then gave them into the small hand stretched out to receive them.

At the same instant the lovers' lips met in one long passionate kiss.

"Poppy, what did you think of me for thus returning your flowers?" asked Sir Ernest, glancing lovingly into his love's face.

"I tried hard to remember that I had promised to be the wife of Hugo Ralston, and to forget that I still loved you as much as ever, Ernest!"

"My darling! I did not dare approach you to address you, for I felt that you belonged to another. But, oh! Poppy, none can ever know what were my feelings as I turned away and sought your mother and bade her a hurried farewell. I could not long remain under the same roof as yourself, knowing that we could only meet as strangers! Ah, Adeline! Adeline! your hatred was greater than your love!" concluded Sir Ernest, in low, bitter tones.

"And yet you forgave her, Ernest?" questioned his companion, glancing up at his face, now stern and hard-looking as he dwelt on the wrong done him by a woman's hand.

"Poppy, it was her dying request, and I could not but comply. It is useless to reflect now upon the wrong she dealt us, but for a moment I forgot that I am once again with you, my darling! I shall soon forget, in present happiness, all the woes and miseries of the dark past, and shall but live for you happiness, my darling!"

A lovely evening in soft, balmy May. Already the roses are blooming in the sheltered corners chosen for them at Leigh Towers. Deep, crimson-headed ones, mingled with the pure white, shed their soft fragrance around as they slumbered while the clear, pale moonlight shone down upon them. Very, very fair looked the grounds at Leigh Towers as they lay all bathed in the moon's soft fulgence. Very, very fair, and very bewitching; and so thought the lovely woman leaning on the arm of her husband, as she threaded her way through narrow alleys and winding walks, and lifted her delicate evening robes from the dewy grass as she emerged forth on to the lawn.

"And what does my wife think of her new

home?" tenderly asked Sir Ernest Landom, as he bent down and glanced lovingly into the fair face, partially hidden by the soft azure wraps sheltering the golden head from the dewy night air.

"I have never seen anything so beautiful!" replied the young bride, letting her violet eyes wander from smooth, even lawns to distant leafy avenues and flowery beds, and then back to her husband's handsome face and loving eyes.

"I am glad my darling likes it!" was all the latter replied.

"And, Ernest, you could leave all this for—for me?" whispered the young bride, presently, as they stood near the grand old elms and faced the grey stone manor—Sir Ernest Landom's ancestral home.

"My darling!" the enraptured husband made response, "I would gladly leave it again to-morrow if my Poppy were not here to cheer it with her presence. Ah, Poppy! you can never picture to yourself the long and dreary hours spent within these walls—a dreariness that was only relieved by the sight of a few withered flowers, and the remembrance of a sweet face framed in golden hair! And then came the time when I knew it was forbidden me to remember even this much of the happy days of the past. And then came darkness and dreariness in very truth! But all is past now, and henceforth we will but endeavour to be happy, and put aside for ever the days caused us both by 'A WOMAN'S REVENGE.'

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

"GRANDPA, dear, we have come to wish you many happy returns of your birthday; and mamma says if you will give us each a shilling, we are not to lose it on our way home."

"PAPA," said a boy just returned from a sleight-of-hand entertainment, "I wish I was a conjurer." "Why, my son?" asked the parent blandly. "I would turn you into a rat, call up the cat, and wouldn't I have a lark!" cried the little urchin.

YOUNG MISTRESS (at the parlour door): "Eliza, what is that bell ringing for so violently?" Cook (below): "It's on'y me, um, I want you down in the kitchen a minute!"

SCENE:—Doctor's house. Little boy at the front door: "Is the doctor in? 'Cause, if he is, I want to see him at once." Servant: "He's not in." Little Boy: "Well, just as soon as he gets home, you tell him to come over to our house and take that baby away he left last week. It's in the way."

A SHARWF PREACHER, after an eloquent charity sermon, said to his hearers, "I am afraid, from the sympathy displayed in your countenances, that some of you may give too much. I caution you, therefore, that you should be just before you are generous; and wish you to understand that I desire no one who cannot pay his debts to put anything in the plate." The collection was a rare one.

A JUBILANT voter wrote two letters immediately after the return of his candidate at a late election—one to his son, consisting of the single word "Hurrah!" and the other a few sentences of condolence to a dear friend who had lost his wife. In his excitement he mixed the envelopes, and the result can be imagined when the bereaved widower received the wrong letter.

"Ah, old fellow!" said a gentleman, meeting another in the street, "so you are married at last. Allow me to congratulate you, for I hear you have an excellent and accomplished wife." "I have, indeed, sir; she is perfectly at home in literature, in music, in art, in science—in short, at home everywhere, except—" "Except what?" "Except at home."

It is said that it is as hard to hide one's love as it is to hide a sneeze; neither of them can be suppressed.

TEACHER: "Master Henry, if you had grown to be a man and had three thousand pounds, but you wanted to build a house which would cost you ten thousand pounds, what would you still need?" Henry: "A rich wife!"

"I wish I had lived in the days of Adam and Eve," said a tired-looking man. "Why so?" asked a friend. "Because I should not have been so intolerably bored by hearing people bewail the good old times of their ancestors!"

Girls who wish to have small, prettily-shaped mouths should repeat at frequent intervals during the day, "Fanny Finch fried five floundering fish for Francis Fowler's father."

"Why do you wink at me, sir?" said a beautiful young lady, angrily, to a stranger. "I beg your pardon, madam," replied the wit. "I winked as men do when looking at the sun; your splendour dazzled my eyes."

"BESSIE," said Cecil to his sister, "I have a fancy to a young lady with whom I am but slightly acquainted, and would like to know what her faults are. How can I find out?" "Praise her to her young lady acquaintances!" said Bessie.

BIG SISTER (shouting to Bobby): "Bah-bee. You are wanted to do an errand." Bobby (shouting back): "Tell mother I can't do it now; I'm busy." Big Sister: "It's not mother who wants you, it's father." Bobby (hastily): "All right. Tell him I'll be there in a minute."

"AUNTY," said a beautiful girl, as she listened to her betrothed lover's retreating footsteps, "I sometimes have a ticklish sensation about my lips and face. What can I do for it?" "I don't know, my dear, unless you make George shave off his moustache!"

PROFESSOR: "Now, I've put you ten questions, none of which you have answered right. That comes from your being absent from my classes the best part of six months." Candidate: "It comes from this, that a fool may ask ten times more than a wise man can answer."

"Then you think, Claribel, that you could be happy as my wife?" "Oh, yes; I'm sure of it." "And you love me truly?" "No-o-o, but I could be happy?" "If you do not love me, you surely could not be happy?" "Oh, yes, I could." "But how?" "Well, I could show that odious Smith girl next door that I could get a husband if I liked." "And that would make you happy?" "Yes."

AT A RECENT PICNIC there was one boy who took everything that came in his way with one exception. A plate of cake was passed to him, and after viewing it critically a moment he remarked: "I don't want any of that; my mother made it!"

DAUGHTER (HOME FROM SCHOOL): "Now, papa, are you satisfied? Just look at my testimonial—'Political economy, satisfactory; fine arts and music, very good; logic, excellent.' Father: "Very much so, my dear—especially as regards your future. If your husband should understand anything of housekeeping, cooking, mending, and the use of a sewing-machine, perhaps your married life will indeed be happy."

AN AVARICIOUS FELLOW IN BRUSSELS GAVE A large dinner. Just as the guests sat down, a piercing shriek was heard in the courtyard. The host hurried out, and returned pale, affrighted, and his hands covered with blood. "What is it?" was the inquiry. "Alas!" he said, "a poor workman, father of a large family, has met with a terrible accident. He was knocked down by a cart and grievously wounded. Let us aid him." A collection was taken up, and the guests contributed twelve hundred francs. It was the miser's ruse to make them pay for the dinner.

SOCIETY.

THE Queen and Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg are expected to reside at Windsor Castle till about the third week in December, when the Court will remove to Osborne for the winter season. Prince Henry of Battenberg is to be presented with the freedom of Windsor before the departure of the Queen for Osborne.

LADY ISABEL CLAYTON, of Fyfield House, near Maidenhead, recently met with a serious accident. Her ladyship was driving a pony attached to a dog cart, and came into collision with a wagon loaded with hay. Lady Isabel was thrown violently several yards, sustaining serious injuries about the head and a severe shock to the system. She was picked up in an unconscious state, and was removed home.

BARON PAWEŁ VON RAMMINGEN was recently summoned to Germany in consequence of his father being dangerously ill. Princess Frederica came south with Her Majesty, and took up her residence at Hampton Court Palace.

PRINCESS BEATRICE's illness was caused by a severe cold, the chill being taken when driving after dark in an open carriage. Her Royal Highness, although now better, is still far from well.

THE Princess Christian has, we regret to hear, been confined to her bed ever since she returned from Germany, with a severe cold and bronchial attack. Her Majesty has driven almost every day to Cumberland Lodge to visit her Royal Highness.

A copy of Winterhalter's portrait of the Queen, painted in 1859, and now in Buckingham Palace, has been placed in the Lerwick Town Hall. The copy has been made by Mr. G. Park, and is presented by Mr. Peterson, a Melbourne merchant. The inscription on the frame describes Queen Victoria as thirty-first in descent from the first Norse Jarl of Orkney, and mentions also her descent from King Harold Fairhair and St. Olaf.

THE Marquis Conyngham has it in contemplation to let Bifrons, the ancestral seat near Canterbury, and reside permanently in Ireland, where he has two seats, Slane Castle, co. Meath, and the Hall, Mountcharles, co. Donegal.

THE Duke and Duchess of Connaught stayed at Clarence House when they were in town, as Buckingham Palace for some time has been in the hands of painters, decorators, and other workmen.

THE Rev. Canon Hawkins, who for forty years was vicar of the parish of St. Woolos, Newport, Wales, celebrated a few days ago his golden wedding, and the occasion was marked by the presentation of a silver salver and a purse of 100 guineas, which had been subscribed for by about 200 friends of the haloed and happy couple.

As a memorial to the late Sir Titus Salt, the governors of the Salt Schools have decided to build a new Science and Art School.

PRINCE ALBERT of Monaco has made it known that on his recent voyage on the Atlantic in his yacht the *Hirondelle* he flung overboard 150 bottles and copper cylinders, with his name and address on each, his object being to determine the course of the Atlantic Ocean currents. The Prince states that he will be indebted to anyone who will forward to him any bottle or cylinder he may find, mentioning at the same time where they were picked up.

THERE has been much talk in Berlin society lately of a projected alliance between Princess Victoria, born in 1865, second daughter of the Crown Prince, and Prince William of Wurtemberg, who is heir to the throne of that country. The Prince, who was born in 1848, is a widower, with one daughter, his first wife, who died in 1882, having been an elder sister of the Duchess of Albany.

STATISTICS.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS IN 1885.—The returns of the Board of Trade state that during the first nine months of the present year 678 persons were killed, and 2,508 injured on or about the railways of the United Kingdom. The numbers for the like period of 1884 were 829 killed and 2,904 injured. Of these six passengers were killed in the present year as compared with 32 during the like period in 1884, and 329 passengers were injured, the number in 1884 being 557. Servants of companies or contractors killed were 323, and injured 1,536, the numbers in 1884 having been 395 and 1,748 respectively. Of trespassers, some of whom were suicides, 213 were killed and 933 injured, as compared with 254 and 136 respectively in 1884.

GEMS.

CORRECTION does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure is as the sun after a shower.

IT is not what we say of ourselves so much as what others say of us that gives us our standing in the world.

To reach the height of our ambition is like trying to reach the rainbow—as we advance it recedes.

INGRATITUDE is so deadly a poison that it destroys the very bosom in which it is harboured.

We have heard many women complain of their husbands' neglect of home. A spoonful of honey will keep more bees in the hive than ten of vinegar.

DISAPPOINTMENT in the matter of friendship arises chiefly, not from liking our friends too much, but from an over estimate of their liking for or opinion of us.

To cultivate the humane and benevolent feelings is not a mere pleasant privilege to avail ourselves of at pleasure; it is an obligation resting upon us all, without the fulfilment of which any claim to justice, even in outward conduct, falls to the ground.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BOILED FOWLS WITH ONION SAUCE.—Place a couple of fowls trussed for boiling, with an onion and a piece of butter inside each, into a saucepan with sufficient water and three ounces of butter, a couple of carrots, a bundle of sweet herbs (parsley, thyme, and celery), with pepper and salt to taste; let them boil slowly till done—about one hour. Serve with the sauce over them, and a circle of Brussels sprouts, plainly boiled in salted water, round them.

HASHED PORK.—The remains of cold roast pork, two onions, one teaspoonful of flour, two blades of pounded mace, two cloves, one tablespoonful of vinegar, half a pint of gravy, pepper and salt to taste. Chop the onions and fry them a nice brown, cut the pork into thin slices, season them with pepper and salt, and add these to the remaining ingredients. Stew gently for about half-an-hour, and serve garnished with sippets of toasted bread.

MINCED VEAL.—Cut, but do not chop, cold veal in small pieces; rub some butter and flour together to a cream, according to the quantity of your veal, and stir it into a sufficient quantity of boiling milk, also the grated rind of a lemon; let these boil together until the consistency of cream; sprinkle a little flour, salt, and white pepper over the cut veal, and add to it the cream; stand it where it will keep up to the boiling point, but not boil; when thoroughly heated through, squeeze the juice of a lemon over it, and serve quickly on bits of dry toast.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ENERGY.—No gifts, endowments, or advantages can ever make up for the lack of mental energy, enthusiasm, and will. Their beauty will fade away as surely as that of a plant when deprived of air and sunlight. We cannot take delight in a mind that lies dormant and inert, for whatever may be its latent powers, they will always remain latent, and therefore be valueless.

KINDNESS and cordiality of manner are scarcely less pleasing to the feelings than expressed compliment, and they are the more safe for both parties, since they afford no foundation for building up expectations; a species of architecture sufficiently notorious for the weakness of the foundations that support an enormous superstructure.

WOMAN AS MAN'S COMFORTER.—As the vine which has longed twined its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted by it in sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling round it with its caressing tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs, so it is beautifully ordered by Providence that woman, who is the mere dependent and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his study and solace when smitten with sudden calamity; winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head, and binding up the broken heart.

HEALTH, like success in life, is to be gained by paying attention to details. It is better to try to keep from catching cold than to be trying to avoid infection. More can be done to check cholera by keeping houses clean than by using tons of disinfectants. Nature gives health. It is a man's perversity in departing from Nature's teaching which leads to disease. Nature intended all to have fresh air, sufficient food, uncontaminated water, and exercise. Let us accept Nature's bequest, if we prefer health to disease.

FRIENDSHIP.—Men's friendship for one another are always more or less shaped by a business feeling; women's for men are generosity itself. Happy the man who has a woman for his friend—thrice happy who has her in his wife! To be this, her husband's friend, is woman's triumph. For the glory of her life lies not in the admiration of her lover, but in the solid confidence of her husband, in his reliance upon her intelligence and truth, in his esteem for her piety and virtues.

OVERLOOKING what lies next to hand is a common mistake of youth. The best days for action are too often wasted in "prospecting" for the far future while the work of life lies in the near. Education does not educate unless it draws out what is in a lad, lass, or "youngster." The thing nearest is what is to be first attended to, and, if the near future is properly disposed of, the far will take care of itself. The millionaire's pile was founded on pennies; and, what is better than money, good standing and a useful life begin in youthful modesty, application, and diligence.

WORKING FOR OTHERS.—One of the highest and best enjoyments comes through what is done for others. This is believed in theoretically, but seldom practically. If a man has money, he imagines that the way to enjoy it is either to keep and accumulate it or to spend it on personal gratification; yet he misses the very finest of his delights when he refuses to share it or its benefits with others. So with our time, our talents, and our thoughts—kept to ourselves, or used simply for our own delectation, they do not give us a tithe of the real enjoyment that they afford when we use them liberally for the family, or friends, or the community. No one who has once tasted the sweets of ministering successfully to the happiness of others will, if he be intelligent, ever again relapse into a purely selfish use of his advantages, whatever they may be.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. T. T.—Yes. He should salute the lady's acquaintance out of respect to her.

T. R. W.—Yes. It would be better quietly to pay the damage than to have a lawsuit about it.

I. P. G.—Yes. Engaged lovers should be loyal to one another to the heart's core, and neither should do anything to cause the other pain.

F. D.—The hands can be hardened only by exercise and labour. Resin applied to either the hands or feet will not toughen them.

S. S.—Tell your cousin plainly that you do not desire an introduction to his friend, as he is distasteful to you on account of his associates and position in life.

DAN.—Make inquiry at a local hardware shop for the article named. Doubtless you have seen it repeatedly stated in this column that addresses are never inserted.

C. F. B.—1. Immerse your head in cold water morning and night, dry the hair thoroughly, and then brush the scalp until a warm glow is produced. This has a stimulating effect on the roots of the hair, and prevents it from falling out. 2. It is far above the average.

R. P.—Dark brown hair, of rather coarse texture; not enough so, however, to warrant the jeers of your companions, who accuse you of having "horse-hair" or "bristles." Pay no attention to such rude remarks, and in a very short while your tormentors will cease their chaffing.

C. F. F.—Hiawatha (made the subject of a poem by Longfellow) was a mythical personage of miraculous birth. He was believed by the North American Indians to have been sent among them to clear their rivers, forests, and fishing-grounds, and to teach them the arts of peace.

S. L. D.—1. A fair and inexpensive black ink may be made as follows: Bruised gall, one pound; logwood, two pounds; common gum, three-quarters of a pound; green cypars, half a pound; water, five gallons. Boil and strain. 2. To prevent ink from moulding, put in it a few drops of creosote.

A. A.—"True Blue" is a Spanish phrase, and refers to the notion that real aristocratic families have blue blood in their veins, while the blood of inferior persons approaches more, or less, to a black hue. Hence the phrase, *sang azul* (aristocratic blood) and *sang noir* (commoner's blood).

E. N. N.—There is no general recognition of any particular claimant to the Napoleonic succession should it ever again rise. Since the death of the Prince Imperial it is almost universally believed that France has definitely abandoned her thoughts of another empire, and resolved to continue a constitutional republic.

W. P. W.—Cold feet and hands proceed from constitutional causes, which cannot be changed, but they can be benefited by wearing warm clothing, and rubbing the whole body once a day, and the feet and hands still oftener, with a rough towel, or, better, a hair strap. Remember the proverb: "A cool hand, a warm heart."

E. L. L.—In certain cases of chronic nasal catarrh specialists have given great relief by a slight surgical operation. In cases of chronic general catarrh only change of air and various palliatives can be prescribed. Recent cases usually yield to care, warm clothing, and avoidance of draughts and sudden changes of temperature.

D. R.—Get a chemist to compound the following wash for pimples: Sulphur-water, 1 ounce; acetated liquor of ammonia, 1/2 an ounce; liquor of potassa, 1 grain; white wine vinegar, 2 ounces; and distilled water, 2 ounces. Bathe the face night and morning with this mixture, at the same time taking some mild aperient medicine.

W. W.—To correct the odour of decayed teeth two drops of a concentrated solution of permanganate of potash may be used in a glass of water as a wash, or a few drops of a weak solution of the same material may be introduced into the cavity of the tooth on a small piece of raw cotton.

C. H.—The magnifying-glass was invented by Roger Bacon, an English monk, born at Ilchester, in the county of Somerset, in 1214. Francis Bacon was born in London, January 22, 1561; consequently, your friend is slightly confused when he avers that the latter is entitled to the honour of the invention spoken of above.

F. F.—Your sister's objections to the contemplated marriage with a youth of nineteen years of age are based upon good grounds. He is doubtless a mere boy yet, and not capable of assuming the responsibilities necessarily devolving upon a husband. Wait for three or four years, when both of you will be better fitted to embark in married life.

P. M. T.—Medicine is the only one of the learned professions which can be said to be really open to women. Art and literature are as ready to receive women who have the power to excel as they are to receive men. Women can learn shorthand and telegraphing, and go into business like men, only, there being many applicants for any place which women can fill, the wages are usually lower than those earned by men. Factory work, housework, and subordinate places in retail shops are the principal occupations open to young girls who have little or no special training.

E. T.—1. You had better refer the matter to a lawyer. According to our understanding of the case as described by you, the parties to the mock marriage were fully aware of the fact that they were being married by a minister in the presence of witnesses, and consequently the ceremony was done in legal form. 2. Very neat penmanship.

M. N. C.—1. Dimples in the cheeks, arms or chin are generally considered "beauty spots," and are held in high esteem by their lucky possessors. 2. Very light brown. 3. A girl possessing such an excellent education as that described would be fitted to act as a saleslady. 4. Your spelling, grammar, and penmanship are all that can be desired.

LAURA.—The prostrating effects of drinking to excess may, it is said, be alleviated by the following tonic: Mix together five grains of sulphate of quinine; tan drops of aromatic sulphuric acid; half an ounce of the compound tincture of cardamoms; one and a half ounces of ginger syrup, and two ounces of water. Dose, a table-spoonful three times a day.

M. X. A.—As the redness only troubles you during the winter months it is probably due to cold. You should rub the nose with vaseline, or with some other harmless emollient, and protect the face from extreme cold. The regular "rum blossom," which sometimes afflicts the most temperate, is caused by a disease of the skin, known as "acne rosacea," and requires a regular course of treatment by a dermatologist.

EVENTIDE.

When Evening's quiet fills the land,
And deepening shades of night expand;
When welcome Peace, with soothing hand,
Makes light our daily care.
'Tis then, in wrapt by Mem'ry's spells,
We hear the soft, entrancing swells
Of sound more sweet than silver bells,
That charm the evening air.

For never year has passed away,
But left mementos of its day—
More prized than jewels that inlay
The monarch's golden crown.

The proud and cherished souvenirs,
Of worthy deeds and high careers,
Of route's doubts and conquered fears,
And dignified renown.

This hour we seem to hear anew
Our dead speak of the love we knew
When their glad lips were sweet with dew
In young life's rosy morn;
While to our inward vision rise
The faces dear and kindly eyes,
That God doth in his Paradise
With brighter grace adorn.

And ever round our lives they fling
The bloom and fragrance of the Spring,
While in our hearts their voices ring
In choicest melody.
So when we hear the village chimes,
We feel at once sweet even-times
They cannot rival in their rhymes
These Bells of Memory!

D. B. W.

G. L. P.—Tuesday, April 10, 1866. 2. It is very seldom that we receive such a fine specimen of penmanship as that displayed in your communication. Most decidedly it is suitable for commercial purposes, provided you are possessed of a knowledge of book-keeping in all its branches. Otherwise you will find it a difficult matter to obtain a position of the kind wanted on the simple recommendation of fine penmanship.

T. S. A.—In the first place, a girl sixteen years old is too young to fully understand the meaning of love; and, in the second, she should not encourage the advances of any one of the opposite sex until she has arrived at the years of discretion. Occupy your time in gaining knowledge, thus fitting yourself for life's struggle in coming years, and dismiss all sentimental swaddle from your mind until your judgment has become more natural than at the present time.

G. F. W.—There are two poems, "To the Cuckoo." One was written by William Wordsworth, the other by John Logan. It is in the poem of the latter that the following stanza, which you partly quote, occurs:—

"Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year!"

W. S. R.—It may be that in asking for a return of the note you displayed a lack of discretion or tact, without doing what could properly be called wrong. If the note was one which it was proper for you to write, all the circumstances of the case being taken into the account, the gentleman might have felt hurt at your asking him to return it. He might have considered such a request a reflection upon his own discretion and loyalty.

T. W. F.—It is possible that he may have done so; but the probability is that your lover is a weak, vacillating person, who does not know his own mind, and chafes under his engagement with you. If you would treat him with dignity and indifference, he would probably try to make amends for his fickleness by renewed protestations of devotion. He seems to be unworthy of any true woman's affection.

C. W. F.—The poem was written by Thomas Moore. You can find it in his works, and also in various hymn books. The first verse is:

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow—
There's nothing true but Heaven."

C. M. W.—1. Adam and Eve are supposed to have spoken in some form of the Semitic language, which was exceedingly primitive, consisting only of a few guttural sounds. Afterwards these sounds were amplified, and something like a language, subject to the many changes of time, was developed. 2. Languages change very rapidly; the language spoken in Rome about A.D. 1000 was widely different from that of the ancient Romans or the modern Italians.

F. C. P.—To make an inexpensive Worcestershire sauce, take port wine and mushroom catap, of each one pint; walnut or other pickle liquor, half a pint; pounded anchovies, four ounces; fresh lemon peel, cut thin, sliced shallots and scraped horseradish, of each one ounce; cayenne, one dram; allspice and black pepper, of each half an ounce; celery seed, one dram. Put into a wide-mouthed bottle, stop close, shake daily for two weeks, and strain.

R. N. W.—1. It does not seem very likely that after having been treated so coolly by you he will pursue his attentions any further. The great trouble with you seems to be an inordinate desire to flirt. The sooner this habit is broken the better for your prospects in the matrimonial field, as sensible men soon learn to shun a coquette, who appears to consider their affection and love as mere playthings. 2. An hour's practice each day will be sure to bring about a great improvement in your handwriting.

M. D. K.—1. The wedding-ring is placed by the groom on the third finger of the bride's left hand on the day of the marriage, and not before that time. The bride is not supposed to furnish her intended with a ring, as you appear to think. 2. Write the following in your lover's album:

"Ah, could you look into my heart,
And watch your image there,
You would own the sunny loveliness
Affection makes it wear."

D. D. S.—1. Yes; in 1808 a proposal to surrender Gibraltar to Spain was agitated in England, but it did not meet with much favour. 2. The Strait of Gibraltar, the channel connecting the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, lies between the southernmost part of Spain, from Cape Europe to Cape Trafalgar, and the African coast opposite, from Ceuta Point on the east to Cape Spartel on the west. Its length from east to west is about thirty-six miles. Under the Spanish crown Gibraltar was so strengthened as to be deemed impregnable, but it was taken on August 4, 1704, by a combined English and Dutch fleet, and held until 1713, when it was confirmed to Great Britain by the treaty of Utrecht. The Spaniards attacked it in 1727, and again, assisted by France, in 1770-1783; but on both occasions raised the siege on the signing of preliminaries of peace. 3. The value of Gibraltar as a strategic point was first discovered by the Saracens, who landed there in 711. It is of incalculable importance to Great Britain, being the key to the Mediterranean, and one of the chain of fortresses connecting her with her East Indian possessions.

MISTRESS.—It is supposed that the rat originated in Asia, and spread from thence to Europe and Africa. A district in Hindostan is sometimes overrun by myriads of rats that commit great devastations. When the heavy rains which usually fall in June do not come, the pestilence of rats is sure to follow. The rains fill the holes and crevices in which the rats burrow and breed, and drown them by the million, but a drought permits them all to live and infest the land. The last drought occurred in the district in 1879, and the rats became so numerous that fields of grain were eaten up by them in a few hours. Rewards were offered for their destruction, and vast numbers were killed; but the mass of the people, who believed that each rat was the abode of some departed human soul, refused to take part in their slaughter. They preferred to suffer from the devastations of the rats rather than to incur the wrath of the gods by destroying what they believed to be the temporary asylums of human brethren, who had once lived in human bodies like their own.

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